

THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY, 1887.

THE GAVEROCKS.

A TALE OF THE CORNISH COAST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER VI.

RED FEATHERSTONE.

SQUIRE GAVEROCK'S boat, the 'Mermaid,' was one of which he was justly proud, as the fastest sailer between Tintagel and Trevoze, that is for her size. She was a cutter, decked, and with fixed bowsprit and mast, like a schooner. Hender Gaverock was as much at home on the deck of a boat as on the back of a horse. The only place where he was not at home was—at home, where he found nothing to do and nothing to interest him except the bottle.

About seventy years ago seals were tolerably numerous on the north-west Cornish coast. There are a good many to be found there still, but their numbers have of late been greatly diminished. Seventy years ago they abounded in the caves, where they reared their young, and in the bays they were frequently encountered—their black heads rising out of the sea, with strangeiy human eyes in them, rising and falling with the swell of the sea.

Gaverock took with him his boatman, David Tregellas. If he and Constantine were going to shoot seals, one of the party must be at the helm, another at the jib, and one must be ready with the gun for the sport.

'Got the stone jars there, David?'

'Aye, aye, sir! Strapped together for easy carriage.'

'That is right. I'll run the "Mermaid" to Featherstone's Kitchen—Gwen's shop. We have drunk ourselves out of rum.'

'I reckon us had better not go so far as that,' said Tregellas, shaking his head. 'The birds be all flying inwards, and the water was on fire last night.'

'Glad to hear it,' said Gaverock. 'Here is Constantine with his brains full of city fashions, and his nerves as slack as trade in bullocks. Do him good to have a blow, to clear his head and brace his tendons; and if he gets a splash of brine in his face it will wash out the milk and raspberry, and make his face less like a girl's.'

'What is right for you, Squire, is right for me,' answered Tregellas. 'You've more to lose than I.'

'You mind the jib, David; I'll tend the main-sheet and steer. Now then, Con, hold the gun, and keep your eyes open. Take heed of the boom when I say "Luff"; and don't let it knock you overboard as if you were a lout who had never tasted salt water.'

'I reckon us 'll see no seals to-day, Squire,' said Tregellas. 'What sends the birds inland sends the seals to security—which proves that humans be bigger fools nor birds and beasts.'

'If they don't show on the water we'll follow them into their caves,' answered Gaverock angrily.

'You must have a row-boat for doing that,' argued Tregellas.

The Squire growled. He disliked contradiction. He specially resented it when he knew he was in the wrong. He had made up his mind for sport, and sport he would have in spite of wind and weather.

'Wind sou'-sou'-west,' he said. 'Con, been to Featherstone's Kitchen before?'

'No, father.'

'You shall see the kitchen whence we get our supplies of spirits—spirits that pay no duty.'

The day was pleasant. The sun shone, and the sea rolled, but was not rough. The cutter skimmed like a bird. In vain did Constantine and his father look for seals. Not a seal was to be seen. They ran into the little coves, but the creatures were not there, neither basking on the reefs nor floating on the waves.

Nothing can be conceived more magnificent than that coast, with its crags of trap, or contorted slate and gneiss, here and there strangely barred with white spar. In the bays the gulls and kittiwakes were flashing and screaming; and now and then a red-

shanked, scarlet-beaked chough went by with a call of warning. The birds were in excitement, shrieking to each other, and answering in equally high-pitched tones. The morning went by, wasted in hunting after seals which would not show.

'There they are, in yonder cave,' said old Gaverock, indicating with his chin the torn face of cliff, in which were many fissures and vaults. 'If we had only a row-boat, we could go in, and we should find them far away in the dark, lying on ledges, looking at us, or, if we threatened them, flapping pebbles at us with their fins. Golly! I've been hit afore this, and had my head cut open, as surely as if the creatures had taken aim at me with hands. At times I'm fain to believe the seals are human and have souls. I dare say they have about as much as a woman. I was out sealing—it was a day much like this—when I killed Featherstone. Have you ever heard the tale, Con? Well, I dare be bound you've heard tell something about it, and all wrong. None know the real rights but David Tregellas and myself. Red Featherstone was a rover as well as a smuggler. If he had been only the latter, it would have given me a sour soul to have killed him, though we were rivals. Featherstone was a proper bad man. He carried off whatever his hands laid hold of. He had a boat, the like of which was not seen then, but the "Mermaid" would be her match now. Golly! I'd like to have the chance of racing Featherstone's cutter! She was built something the same as this. Featherstone had a large vessel, a schooner, and with her he went to France, or Spain, no one knows whither. He came back to these coasts laden with things—stolen mostly; I don't believe he paid for his goods with money. Here and there along the coast he had his kitchens—that is, store places—whither folks might go and where they might buy what they wanted, spirits and wines and tobacco, and silks and laces and china; I can't tell you what things he did not hide there, and I knew he did a fine trade. The kitchens were vaults scooped out of the rocks, and cottages were built over them with secret entrances, and secret exits to the water. Very useful those kitchens were, and mighty convenient they are still. We are bound now for one, where I shall fill these jars with rum. But Featherstone no longer plies the trade. It is fallen prodigiously since his time. I spiked him. Luff! Mind your head, you fool!'

He altered the course of the 'Mermaid.' 'It is an old story; it happened before you were born or thought of, before I married

your mother. Indeed, I doubt if I should have had your mother if Featherstone had not first been put out of the way. The folks call him Red Featherstone, because he was fond of wearing a scarlet waistcoat laced with gold ; but over it he wore a long oilskin shiny black coat. In all weathers it was the same, and he looked like a porpoise in his shiny suit buttoned over his red waistcoat. But when he came a-courting he left off the oilskin and showed his waistcoat. He was vastly attached to your mother, and I had a fancy towards her too. Of course I had, or I would not have married her. Well, Featherstone and I could not abide one another, as was natural, for we were rivals for your mother, and, by the Lord ! he threatened to carry her off in his schooner if she were not given to him, so her father and brothers were armed and watched night and day when Featherstone's boat was about. One day, just such a day as this—how well I remember it, and so does David yonder ! The sun was darting, a beam (bank of cloud) was over the West, lying on the sea. I was out spearing seals. Guns aren't so plenty or so good as now, and nothing like so sure of aim as a spear. I used to take one of the old weapons from the hall, a halbert with a jagged feather-like barb. I was partial to this weapon, because, if the head went in far enough, the seal could not slip away, the barb held it. Well, as I came shooting round that headland yonder, I was close on the Watcher, which is a shelf of rock leaning with the rough broken edge landwards, and sloping towards the sea. It is only covered in a heavy sea. David and I could not see the Watcher till we were close upon it, and then, there I saw Red Featherstone seated on the sloping shelf priming his pistols. He had on his oilskin coat and oilskin leggings and long boots, and shone in the sun like a porpoise. You couldn't see a scrap of red about him. If he had his scarlet waistcoat on, it was buttoned over. But wait ! you shall hear.' The old man chuckled. 'I didn't see all his waistcoat that day, but I saw some of it, as you shall hear.'

He paused, wiped his brow with his sleeve, and went on. 'When Featherstone saw me he sprang to his feet and swore, and Tregellas stayed his oars—he was that struck with astonishment he didn't know what to do. Then Featherstone shouted to me that now God or the Devil had brought us face to face, and we would have it out, and settle, that hour, who should have Lydia—that's your mother. He held a pistol in each hand : one was a great, brass-mounted horse pistol, and the other was quite a toy

tool, silver mounted. He held the horse-pistol in his right and the other in his left. I had no other arms with me but the old halbert; but I was not afraid. Afraid!' The old man laughed. 'I afraid! I snorted like a walrus, and called to David to pull up to the rock. I stood up in the boat and held the spear above my head ready to cast; but Featherstone was beforehand with me, and he fired the horse-pistol. He missed, for the boat was rocking, but the bullet whizzed past my head, and before ever he could discharge the second at me I flung the spear, and it went through the air straight as a cormorant after a fish, and struck him in the chest and went right through. I saw the end poking out behind, thrusting out his oilskin. That was a grand fling, that was, and I flung with such force that I levered the boat away and she shot back under my feet and brought me down. That was well for me, as at the same moment the second pistol went off—and they say Featherstone was a better aim with his left than with his right. When I picked myself up, I saw Featherstone wrenching at the shaft of the spear to lug it out of him, but he could not, for, as I told you, it was barbed; then it was that I saw some of the red waistcoat, for as he pulled at the spear he pulled the frayed, ragged edges of the red cloth out through the hole in the oilskin where the spear had entered. He could do nothing with it, and he grasped his silver-mounted pistol again, and tried to load it and prime it; but it was all no use—down he fell, and as he fell he threatened me with the little pistol, but couldn't hurt me, it was unloaded. Just then a black boat shot out from the bay; Featherstone's men were in it. They had been to the Kitchen with stores, and they heard the shot and hurried to their oars, and came after me. David and I made off then as best we might. Well, I was somewhat curdled in mind after that, I allow; but it was a fair fight. Nay, it was fair on my side and unfair on his, for a halbert was no match for two pistols. Red Featherstone had been outlawed for his malpractices, so no harm could come to me for having spiked him.'

'What countryman was he?' asked Constantine.

'Featherstone? He was of these parts, and yet he was not. That is to say, his family lived somewhere up the coast just over the border in Devon. The family is respectable enough; and I reckon Red Featherstone took to roving more for sport than for what it brought him. He was a wild, wicked, restless spirit. I don't fancy the taste continued in the family. I've heard nothing of them since. Indeed, I do not know if the race still exists.'

‘Was no inquiry made after his death?’

‘No,’ answered old Gaverock. ‘He had been outlawed for his misdeeds. I will say that for Featherstone, he never stole anything from the people on this coast; but he was not so particular elsewhere, and I’ve heard he committed all sorts of depredations on the coasts of Ireland and Wales, and South Devon and Dorset, besides what he did in France. No, nothing was ever done about his death. The news got all over the country that I had spiked him, and some said it was a good job and others did not think so. And some again said that the last of Featherstone had not been seen.’

‘If the man was dead,’ said Constantine, ‘of course the last of him had been seen.’

‘Luff! Look out for your head. I don’t know that I’ll tell you the reason why I say this. About a year after I had killed Featherstone, I was out on a dark night, and the summer lightning was flashing in the sky. Well, I had my eye on the lighthouse of Towan. The light was steady enough, but what was queer to me was every now and then something dark came between me and it, and when it did I heard a click and saw some sparks. I couldn’t make it out at all till a flash came out of the West, and then, for an instant, I saw a black boat shoot past me, and in it stood Featherstone with the pistol in his left hand, and he clicked the trigger, and the flint flashed sparks, but the pistol would not go off. Ever since then I hear constantly the click of the pistol and see the sparks fly out, but I laugh at Featherstone. He can do nothing to me. The pistol must be in mortal hands to be loaded and primed to do me or mine any hurt. Then, again, one day I was in my boat after seals. Tregellas wasn’t with me, I was alone, and I rowed into one of the caves near the Watcher. I got a long way in, but the seals were not there; at last I turned to come back, and as I did so, I saw a dark figure in the mouth of the cave, dressed in an oilskin long coat and high boots, standing, I fancied, on a rock that stood out of the water, and yet I knew there was no rock there, and he turned about, and I saw something like a hump on the back. I had a lantern in the bottom of the boat and I held it up, and then I had a good look forward, and I saw a pair of flashing eyes and white teeth. The shining sea was behind him, and he seemed to go up and down on the waves that rolled in, so then I knew he did not stand on a rock. He was busy with his pistol and snapped it, and the sparks flew out.

Then I laughed so loud that the cave rang with the roar of my voice, and I cried, "No good! no good, Featherstone! you can't hurt me till mortal hand has hold of that pistol." I've not seen him since.'

'But how did you get out of the seal cave, father?'

'I rowed right forward and right through him.'

'How do you mean?'

'I was not afraid. I dipped my oars and went towards the entrance, and I looked over my shoulder and saw him still there, and I struck where he stood with the prow, and then I saw sparks flying all about me; and, what was most curious of all, a spotted dog all at once appeared, and ran from the bows to the stern past me and leaped into the water again, and I saw it no more.'

'Dog! What dog can that have been?'

'Featherstone's dog. He always had such a dog. When I spiked him, the dog stood barking on the Watcher at me. He kept barking as I rowed away. Now, look out, Con! Mind yourself! There is the Watcher. That was the last I saw of Featherstone—last but once, and that was in a dream the same night. I reckon I was a bit flurried and fanciful with what had happened, and I thought at night I saw Featherstone standing by my bedside and leaning over me. I saw the red threads of the waistcoat sticking out through the oilcloth coat where the staff of the spear had made a hole, and there ran out, drop by drop, some blood. Tick, tick, tick!—I heard my watch go—then a drop. Tick, tick, tick!—then another drop. Featherstone's eyes seemed to glare into mine and through my head, and he said, "You I cannot, but yours." Then tick, tick, tick!—another drop—and he had vanished. Now, the curious thing is that, when I woke in the morning, I saw three—just three drops of blood on my sheet: so he had been with me just nine seconds. Since then I have not been threatened by him. What he meant when he said "Not you, but yours," or rather, "You I cannot, but yours," is more than I can make out. However, I'm glad I'm rid of him. I know very well he could do me no harm. But he was a nuisance—yes, he was a nuisance.'

The old man paused a moment, then laughed and said: —

'After all I do not care. Let him come again if he will. Let him try his worst. He can do nothing. Keep a good heart, and renounce the devil and all his works, and no Featherstone will hurt me nor mine. Look at the Watcher! Here we are, Con,

running into the bay where many a keg has been unshipped for Featherstone's Kitchen.'

The little vessel had her prow turned into a small bay surrounded by sand-hills and with a good beach. Here the rocks were of yellow clay-slate in thin layers: very friable and of inferior height. The 'Mermaid' ran ashore, and Gaverock and his son leaped out on the sand.

'Bide with her, Tregellas!' shouted the old Squire; then turning to his son, he said, 'Con, where are the stone jars? Sling them over your shoulders and carry them after me to the Kitchen.'

'Don't y' be long away, now, maister,' said David Tregellas. 'Cast your eye to wind'ard, there's a gale in thicky (yonder) black beam, and us'll have to tack terrible to get home.'

'I see as well as you that wind is coming,' answered Gaverock. 'With bread and cheese and two jars of rum we shan't suffer even if we reach home late and with wet skins. I like the smell of a gale. Follow me, Con!'

Then the old man strode up the shore, and in a few minutes reached a miserable low cottage that cowered under a sand-hill thickly overgrown with coarse grass. A few tamarisks, with their pale pink flowers now blooming, grew beside the cottage on a wall that held back the sand from overflowing and burying the entrance.

The cottage was one story high, thatched with reed, built of the yellow stone dug out of the rock which the sand covered. It had a single window—very small—and a low door. Outside the door, on a bench, knitting a stocking, sat a woman with tanned face and coarse grey hair that blew about her head. She looked up as Gaverock approached and nodded.

'We have come for a supply, Gwen,' said the old man.

'You'm come right enough, Squire,' answered she, 'but you'm none going home 'zacklie as you came.' Then she pointed with one of her knitting-pins at the sky.

'Well, Gwen, I don't object to a capful of wind and the backs of the white horses.'

'Better return by land, Squire. The white horses are going mad to-night, and may kick you out of your saddle.'

'By land! Not I, Gwen, when I have the "Mermaid" to carry me. Be quick, fill me the jars.'

She took the stone bottles without another word and went

indoors. She was absent for some time. Gaverock stood and looked at the sea. The day was rapidly changing. The wind sobbed among the sea grass, and tossed the tamarisks as if trying to tear them up. It carried the sand in little puffs into Gaverock's face. A haze had overspread the sky, and the sun was shorn of its brightness. Rays of vapour struck across the vault of heaven, radiating from the West, straight as sun rays, but dark; a mass of white, curd-like cloud was drifting below the upper canopy. The sea on the horizon was like indigo, near land it was the colour of olive.

'There is no time to be lost. We shall have a rough passage back to Towan,' said the old man.

'Leave the "Mermaid" here,' advised the woman, coming out with the bottle. 'Stay the night in this place. There be plenty of room though the house don't look to have accommodation; and when the storm be overpast, go home in the morning. Or, if you prefer, go back by land.'

'No, no,' answered Gaverock. 'I said I'd be home in the "Mermaid"; and as I came so I return, and that—to-night.'

'Ah, Squire,' said the woman, 'you always was as unturnable as a rusty jack.'

'Take up the rum, Con!' ordered the old man.

'Here is the money for you, Gwen.'

Then he and his son went back to the boat, the latter laden with the jars of rum.

'I was not born to be drowned,' said Hender Gaverock as he slung himself on board, in reply to a question of Tregellas whether he would risk running into the storm. 'Con, take charge of the bottles; don't let them be washed overboard. Mind, as soon as we catch the gale we shall have to reef. We must keep up some sail, as we have to tack to get home, but we shall have to reef pretty short if the wind be violent.'

'We shan't pass the Watcher without reefing,' said David.

'You tend the jib,' said old Gaverock. He looked up again at the sky. The sun was behind the vapour, that was like the garment of Deianira, through the rents of which fire and venom were spurting. He untied his red kerchief from his throat, and fastened it over his rough shock of hair. That was the Squire's confession that he recognised the gravity of the storm he was about to face.

'David,' said he, 'we shall have a dirty night.'

'Dirt, sir, ain't the word for it. Say "offal" (awful).'

‘David, if the wind shifts a point north, we shall do. We shall make a quick run after all, and be back at Towan to-night.’

‘The night is falling already,’ said Constantine.

‘You mistake cloud for night, boy,’ shouted the Squire.

‘We had better not risk it,’ urged the young man.

‘To which I say Amen,’ said Tregellas.

‘What! afraid of a wetting as of a spill?’ laughed Gaverock; and the ‘Mermaid’ shot out, as David, who had shoved her off, leaped on board and went forward.

Hender Gaverock had no fear. He was constitutionally incapable of fear; always in a fume with excess of energy, ever sanguine, delighting in peril, as hardy as any pilot, he despised the caution of Tregellas and the fear of Constantine. He knew his boat, and could manage her as he could manage his horse. She obeyed every turn of his wrist with docility. Her timbers were sound. He knew what he had to do. He must tack to windward into the eye of the gale for a sufficient distance, and then reach away to Sandymouth, past Cardue. In Sandymouth was his harbour.

So long as he could keep up sufficient canvas there was no danger, but the gale, if it greatly increased, would not allow him to carry much sail. He must, moreover, beat outward the proper distance, or he would be swept in on cliffs where his boat would go to pieces like matchwood.

As the ‘Mermaid’ leaped into the open sea beyond the Watcher, which was now enveloped in boiling foam, the wind came down on her, together with a heavy sea. A shadow like night—or like a presentiment of great disaster—fell over the boat.

‘Reef away!’ shouted Gaverock. ‘David!’

‘Aye, aye, sir.’

‘What boat is that to starboard? Can you make her out?’

After a pause, Tregellas replied, ‘Don’t know her at all, maister. Her looks a’most like the living black shadow of the “Mermaid.”’

‘By Heaven!’ shouted Gaverock, almost springing to his feet, but not relaxing his grasp on the tiller, ‘I’m damned if that be not Red Featherstone’s boat! I know her cut. I’ve not clapt eyes on her these thirty years, but I know her again. What has brought her out to-night? I said I’d be glad to race the “Mermaid” against her, and though she be the devil’s own boat, and sail in the devil’s own weather—golly! I’ll race her!’

CHAPTER VII.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

‘HOLD the sheet, Con,’ ordered Hender Gaverock, ‘and throw yourself to wind’ard as ballast. Whatever you do, but one turn round the cleet. Many a score of boats have been lost by a double turn.’

The wind rose to a hurricane, the waves piled themselves up, and their foaming crests broke against each other. The day was declining, but the dense clouds made it dark before its time. All colour was gone out of the sea.

Now the little ‘Mermaid’ proved how good a vessel she was; she skimmed the waves like a seabird, she danced on their crests like the mermaid that she was. A grim smile lighted the face of old Gaverock. He was proud of his boat, and happy to be able to prove her powers. She was scantily provided with ballast for such a gale—only with Constantine laden with the stone jars.

‘Have the bottles with you, lad. Take them over from side to side,’ said his father. ‘We must keep on all sail we can.’

For some time he saw no more of the mysterious boat, but as he tacked he again obtained a glimpse of her; she also, like the ‘Mermaid,’ was standing out to sea. The little cutter leaned over with the force of the wind, the water rushed up before her bows and at times swept her deck.

For a moment the sunlight flared out a parting ray from the west, and, as the ‘Mermaid’ swung up a great billow, the three men saw, to port, the strange boat, as if made of red-hot metal, glowing, glaring, the sail a sheet of flame, the men on board as men of fire.

This was only for a moment. Then the black cloud descended on the sea, and night fell; but still for a while in the west a bloody streak marked the division between sea and sky. Rain began to fall heavily, driving before the wind, drops that struck as hard as hail; it fell so thick that it cut off all sight of the land and of the horizon.

The sea rose higher. The gale lashed at the sea, like a savage groom lashing a horse into a frenzy of fear and fury. The wind shrieked in the rigging, the water hissed and gulped about the boat, the whole air was full of roar, in which, now and again, came the thunder and crash of a plunging billow distinct from

the general noise. Already had they been swept by two or three seas, and were drenched to the skin. The water foamed over old Tregellas, who sat forward, and, pouring over the deck, rushed out behind over the Squire. The other boat was near them—so near that they could have hailed one another had they been so minded. Another reef ought to have been taken in, but Gaverock did not like to confess himself beaten in a race—which was a race for life.

Presently, however, when a furious blast sent them over so that the water wet half the sail, he was constrained to take in the second reef, and then, next time he caught sight of the phantom boat, he saw that those on board her had done the same.

‘Rum, Con ! rum !’ shouted Gaverock, and passed the tin cup to his son, who removed the cork from one of the jars, poured out with shaking hand, and passed a jorum to his father, then drank himself, and finally handed the can to Tregellas. The spirit was needed ; the three men were numb with cold, and wet to the bone.

When the rushing rain held up, the light on Trevoise Head was visible ; but Gaverock saw that it was now impossible for him to make Sandymouth that night. The wind was on shore, and he must run out to sea, and keep well out till break of day. This could only be done by constant tacking. He did not tell Constantine or David. There was no need for him to do so ; both knew it as well as he. Unless he could work out to open sea, the wind would carry him ashore between the horns of Hartland and Trevoise. If he could manage to run under Lundy, he could lie there all night, ready for return next day. Fortunately the gale was not from the north-west, nor was it due west, but with a point or two to the south-west.

The phosphorescent light on the black billows seemed to the Squire to break into lambent flame about the mysterious boat that shot by out of darkness and into darkness again at intervals. By this light he thought he could distinguish the men on board, with their sou’-westers on their heads ; but as they were all to windward, and the boat keeled over steeply, he could see no faces. Their backs were towards him, but he fancied that he saw the man at the helm with a stake protruding from his back. That may have been fancy only. In the uncertain light, with the irregular motion of the boats, with glimpses caught casually between boiling seas, in the excited, strained condition of his mind, Gaverock was liable to be deceived.

Not for a moment did the old man’s heart fail him. His

spirits rose to the occasion. He had expressed a wish to race Featherstone's cutter. Featherstone had taken him at his word: the phantom ship was there, come at his challenge, at one moment fiery, as if the dead man and his boat had sprung to the challenge from the flames of Tartarus, black for the most part, as though drawn from the blackest abyss of hell.

Presently he saw a mighty wall of water, as of ink, rolling on, with the bleary light of the squally western sky behind it, showing its ragged, tossing, threatening crown, sharply cut against the light. Gaverock prepared to meet it, with firm grasp of the helm and set teeth. For a moment it seemed as though the 'Mermaid' were about to cleave it—only for a moment, and then she swung up, all her planks straining, as making a desperate effort; then a rush of whirling foam swept the deck and streamed out of the lee scuppers, as the boat lay over almost on her side. For a moment she staggered, as though hesitating what to do next, righted herself, and then went headlong down into the sea-trough, as though diving like a cormorant after a fish; and the walls of black water stood about her, enclosing her as the waves of the Red Sea above the chariots of Pharaoh.

Whilst this happened, Gaverock fancied he heard a cry from the phantom boat, which he could not see, hidden behind the liquid mounds. Was it a cry of mockery? or was it a threat? He waited till the 'Mermaid' had mounted a roller, and then he replied with a roar of defiance.

It was no longer possible to carry so much sail, and he reefed again—but with reluctance. The fury of the storm seemed to grow. He dared not reef further, lest he should lose all command over the boat.

The spray cut and cross-cut the old Squire's face, as though he were being lashed with a horse-whip. The water poured off his shaggy eyebrows, blinding him. He dared not let go his hold of the tiller even with one hand to wipe his face, and he bent his head, and smeared the brine and rain away on his sleeve.

The rum was called for, and passed frequently. Constantine suffered more than his father. His hands were numb and shook with cold. He was less accustomed to exposure than Hender Gaverock and David Tregellas. For a twelvemonth, at least, he had not been to sea. He was angry and bitter at heart with his father for exposing him to discomfort and danger. He firmly resolved never to go out with the old man again. It would be better

for him to keep away altogether from home, where he was tripped up, mocked, thrust into peril of his life by the inconsiderate, self-willed old man. Now he was afraid of losing the jars of spirits; afraid of a wave washing them away. Therefore he took off his kerchief and tied the handles together with it. They were already bound together with a piece of cord; that cord he passed behind his back, and the kerchief by this means crossed his breast, holding a jar in place under each arm. Thus, when he passed from port to starboard he carried them with him without inconvenience. That was his first idea in thus attaching them about him, but his second was that they might form a protection for himself in the event of his being washed overboard or of the vessel foundering.

Featherstone's boat—or that which Gaverock took for it—had been unseen for some while. All at once it shot by. Then the old Squire thought he could distinguish the faces of the men on board, lit by the upward flare of the phosphorescent foam. They were white as the faces of the dead. Not a word was spoken as they went by, though the wind lulled for a minute.

The lull was but for a minute. A little way ahead through the darkness loomed on them a mountain of water, with a curling, hoary, spluttering fringe on its head. Gaverock steered direct at the billow, and the sail was eased as much as possible to help the little 'Mermaid' over the watery heap. The wave came on as if on wheels, rushed down on them, shivering into specks of foam in all parts, on its side, as sparks blink out here and there in tinder; with a roar and a blow, it engulfed the vessel and her crew. For a moment the 'Mermaid' lay on her lee side, as about to keel over, then gathered herself together and righted once more. Gaverock heard a cry from the water. Tregellas was overboard.

'God be with you, David!' called the old Squire, and said no more. Help was not to be thought of. Then he imagined that he heard a loud, derisive laugh come to him over the water. He could not see Featherstone's boat, but the sound came—or he fancied it came—from the quarter where she must be. Constantine was now alone in the vessel with his father. They had to manage her between them. The old man could not leave the tiller. He held it with iron hand, though numbed with the cold, and with the fingers stiff, without feeling, and contracted. Soon after, again, he caught a glimpse, but only a glimpse, of the phantom boat. The clouds had parted momentarily before the crescent moon, and a ray had touched this mysterious vessel. For

an instant, an instant only, it shone out against the night and storm, ghost-like, as if cut out of white paper and stuck against the soot-black background. Gaverock's pulses smote his ribs like hammers. He was very angry. Featherstone, the Rover, had revisited the world and the scene of his exploits, to have his revenge on the race that had compassed his murder. He was following the 'Mermaid,' to watch and track to death the man and the son of the man who had spiked him. Gaverock looked about for, and with his hand groped after Constantine's gun. A foolish desire for revenge came over him. He would have liked, next time the strange boat appeared, to discharge the gun at the helmsman. But he abandoned the idea almost as soon as it was formed. He dare not desert the tiller, and the gun was doubtless rendered useless by the water.

As the night wore on, Gaverock lost all sense of time. Hour after hour had passed, but the night became no darker; the storm, if it did not abate, grew no worse. Sometimes the clouds aloft were torn apart, and the Squire could look up at the stars and see tattered fragments of vapour being whirled across the gap, which then closed again. At times driving storms of rain came on, and when rain did not fall the air was full of spondrift.

Gaverock guessed pretty well where he was, and he altered somewhat the course of his boat. He was now, according to his reckoning, driving towards the Channel. He could see Lundy light at intervals, far away to leeward, but he had lost sight of that on Trevoe Head.

Gaverock's heart did not fail him, but he was less confident than he had been of reaching home alive. He took the peril without much concern; it was what must be expected by those who went out boating in dirty weather. If he were drowned, well—it could not be helped. All must die. But he was vexed that he had not been able to keep his word, and run home to Towan in spite of the gale. Strange to say, the feeling that prevailed in him, and nerved him to battle with the tempest, was rage against Featherstone. He had dared Featherstone to race him, and Featherstone he saw would beat him, and be able to exult over the wreck of the 'Mermaid.' Not a thought did he give to Towan, to his wife, to Gerans; his one absorbing consideration was—how to disappoint Featherstone, his one consuming ambition was—to come off with life and with an unwrecked boat, not for his own sake, but to defeat and disappoint Featherstone.

Between three and four in the morning, as the dawn was beginning to lighten, Gaverock saw again a mountain of foam before him, so white, so broken, that he feared he was fallen among breakers; next moment he recognised his mistake. No rocks were there, no sandbank. What he saw was a mountain of seething foam, the clash and churn of angry waves that had beaten against each other in a cross sea, and had resolved themselves into a heap of milky brine, that worked and hissed throughout its substance and over its face. The 'Mermaid' went in, and for a moment or two Gaverock and his son were holding their breath, submerged in sea-water. When the 'Mermaid' came out, she lay keel uppermost, and the old man and Constantine were clinging to her tackling and floating in the sea. Gaverock was prepared for this. He had not lost his presence of mind. He hacked through the shrouds on the side, so as to allow the mast to float, instead of working underneath her. Then, using great exertion, he scrambled upon the keel, and Constantine did the same.

There they sat, in cold and wet, gripping the bottom of the boat with hands and knees, covered every few minutes with the waves.

Constantine found that his powers were failing. He could hold on but very little longer. There was only just sufficient light for them to know that the night was changing to day. Constantine pulled the corks out of the jars, one after the other, and poured forth their contents, then he corked them tightly again. Would it not be well for him to pass one of the jars to his father? To do that, he must unknot both his kerchief and the cord, and his hands were too numb for this. Besides, it was doubtful whether a single jar would suffice to float a man. He looked at his father. The old man had strength and endurance in him yet, and Constantine had neither. Besides, the father had run him into this great peril, not he the father. In common justice, therefore, the risk should fall heaviest on the old man.

'Father!' he called, 'I can hold on no longer.'

'Then let go, in God's name. I'll give your respects to mother.'

At that moment a great roller swept over both. As the boat came out, Gaverock saw the strange vessel, with the dark figures in it, shoot by. Then he looked along the keel—Constantine was gone.

The old man's heart beat, not with sorrow for his son, not with

fear for himself, but with anger that Featherstone should have witnessed, and he exulting over, the loss of his servant and his son.

'I will not drown. Golly! I'll spoil his sport yet,' shouted Gaverock; and he took the great knife wherewith he had cut through the cordage, and with it he worked holes between the wood and the lead of the keel, into which he could fit his fingers, dead and frozen though they were, but still with the cling in them, set as claws.

Gaverock could no longer sit up; he lay his length on the keel, with his red face on one side, and the crimson kerchief dripping, hanging loose round his neck—it had been washed off his head—dragging behind him.

The day was lightening. Gulls laughed and fluttered over the wreck, then plunged and shook their wings about the clinging man, regardless of him, knowing his inability to injure them. The wind was certainly abating, but the waves still tumbled, and bounded, and shook themselves into froth, and filled his ears with a sound as of a roar out of infinite space, a roar that would never end, a roar inarticulate and all-pervading. And a sense came over him of cold and weariness—of cold that no heat would ever thaw, but which was so cold as to chill and put out all fire—of weariness that would never grow less, and that no rest would ever refresh, but which also would continue the same, never becoming more acute, a dead weariness, with a thread of eternity penetrating through it. But with all, in spite of cold and weariness and noise, his will never failed—that remained unflagging, nervous, iron. Overhead, pink flashes appeared among the clouds, like the flowers of tamarisks scattered about the sky. His eyes saw neither the colour nor the light. He had no power to observe anything, he had no thought for anything, no wish but one. 'Featherstone! Featherstone! I'm not done yet, and I won't give way.'

Then indistinctly, out of another world, he heard voices, then he became conscious of something not cold and watery touching him. Gradually he came out of his far-off realm of cold and weariness and numbness to the meeting-place of a world of warmth and action and life. He heard human voices, he felt himself caught by hands. But he clung the more fiercely, tenaciously, to the keel. For a moment his senses went, then came again, brought back by the force of his dominant will.

The 'Mermaid' was washed ashore in Bude Haven, and he was in the arms of living men.

He looked round, and saw sand-hills. He tried to cry out triumphantly, 'Featherstone! not beaten!' but his voice and his consciousness failed him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

ON the third day after his interview with Constantine in the Iron Gate, Dennis Penhalligan walked up the coomb and over the hill to Towan. He had heard that Gaverock and his younger son had gone to sea in the 'Mermaid' on the morning of the storm and had not returned. His sister was white, red-eyed, and trembling with excitement and fear. She entreated him to get the last news for her, and relieve her alarm or confirm her worst anticipations.

On reaching Towan he saw a shaggy horse in broken harness patched with rope and string attached to a gig with torn splash-board, and wheels without paint on the tires and paintless half way up the spokes, standing before the door, with a rough boy, almost as wild as the horse, and in clothes as torn and rudely mended as the harness, seated in the gig, flicking the horse with the whip for diversion, without allowing him to leave the door.

Dennis went by into the hall. There he saw Gerans, who held out his hand to him without speaking.

The doctor heard a sound from the adjoining parlour like the wailing of the wind, then words followed, which he could not hear, though he knew the voice to be that of Rose, and then again a fresh burst of wails. Gerans held his face averted.

'Look at that, Dennis,' he said, pointing to a letter on the table. 'Poor Con is lost.'

Dennis took up the letter and read it. It was in the scrawling hand of the Squire:—

'GERANS,—I've sent a boy with a trap for you from Bude, he is to change horses at Camelford. You are to come back with him, and bring along with you two fresh jars, empty, for rum. The others are lost. I'll fill them on my way home. Very sorry to say that Tregellas and Con were drowned, but the "Mermaid" is

all right—came ashore into Bude Haven, keel up, and I astride thereon; so the “Mermaid” was no derelict, and, I’m thankful to add, no wreck neither. Very little wants doing to her, and you and I will bring her back to Sandymouth. By the time you are here I reckon she’ll be ready for sea again. So am I. Sorry about Con. Tell your mother not to be a fool, and cheer up.’

Dennis laid the letter on the table.

‘This is all; you know no more?’

‘Nothing but what the boy has told us. My father came into Bude Harbour yesterday morning on the “Mermaid,” clinging to the keel, unconscious, or nearly so, and poor Con——’ Gerans’ voice broke down, and he went to the window and leaned his elbows on it, looking out, and putting his hand to his eyes, and pretended that something was tickling them.

‘Poor Con,’ he said, after a while, ‘was washed off far out to sea. He told father he could hold on no longer—he was overcome with cold and exhaustion. Tregellas had been carried off the deck earlier. My mother!—my poor mother!’

Dennis respected his sorrow, and was silent for some time. At last he said, in a low tone:—

‘I am very grieved for your mother and you—very. You have my warmest sympathy. You are going to Bude now, I suppose?’

Gerans nodded.

‘I want to know one thing before you leave. Did your brother say anything particular to you or your father before starting on this disastrous expedition?’

‘Say anything! What do you mean? He said “Good-bye” —nothing more. He had no idea that the cruise would be dangerous.’

‘I do not mean that—I mean about Loveday.’

‘About Loveday!’ repeated Gerans with unfeigned surprise. ‘No; what had he to say?’

‘I must tell you now, Gerans. If this had not happened, you would have heard it from his own lips before to-day. I had his promise to reveal it.’

Young Gaverock turned and looked at him with a puzzled expression.

‘It can be nothing of consequence now, Dennis,’ he said. ‘You can tell me some other time. I must be off to Bude to meet my father.’

'No, Gerans. I should wish you to know all at once, before you see him. You are regretting the loss of a brother—I of a brother-in-law.'

The young Squire stared stupidly in Dennis's face. He could not take in the meaning of his words.

'Do you not understand me?' said the surgeon. 'Constantine had married my sister.'

'Nonsense!' Gerans blurted forth. 'You are dreaming.'

'It is true. When Loveday was in Exeter, last spring, Constantine wrongly persuaded her, and she weakly allowed herself to be persuaded. They were married, but I did not know it till three days ago.'

'Impossible. My father was not asked.'

'No; your father was not consulted, nor was I. The thing was done secretly. Your brother acted in a most dishonourable——'

'He is dead,' said Gerans, holding up his hand.

'True; but when I think of this my blood boils. No one's consent was asked. They were married, and parted. She returned to me; he remained at Exeter. Months passed, and the secret did not leak out, though I suspected something was being kept from me. I read it in Loveday's face. I saw it lurking in her once so honest eyes. I taxed her with concealment, but she would confess nothing till the return of Constantine. Then all came out.'

'When?'

'When! Why, in Porth-Ierne.'

Gerans said no more. He looked down, greatly troubled.

'Now,' Penhalligan went on, 'I ask whether Constantine had told your father before he started on this unhappy sail?'

'I am sure he did not. My father would have been so disconcerted, he would have spoken about it to every one. My father gives utterance before all the world to whatever passes through his mind.'

'You will ascertain, when you see the Squire, whether he was told this on the cruise?'

'I do not think Con would tell him then, with old Tregellas in the boat.'

'Then you must tell him as you return with him.'

Gerans shook his head. 'Don't force me to do that—at least, not now, with this trouble on us. Father will launch out in

angry words against—against poor Con; and I cannot bear that—not now, at least. He never cared for Con as did my mother and I. Con was my brother with only a year between us, and we grew up together; we were daily companions and the best of friends. My father never understood Con's superiority—he had far more brains than I have. No, Dennis; let this lie quiet for a few days. It would heighten my mother's grief.'

'It must be known speedily.'

'Why so?'

'Because I will not have it remain hid.'

'What good will it do?'

'It must come out,' said Dennis firmly.

Gerans sighed, and held out his hand to him. 'Well, old fellow, you think of a sister—I of a brother. Of course you are right, but give us time.'

Penhalligan saw Gerans drive off, and then he stood hesitating. Should he go directly home and tell his sister what he had heard, or should he first try to see and speak to Rose? The spell on him was too strong for him to be able to break away. Being at Towan, he must have a glimpse of her face. He knew that she could not be his, because the happiness would be too great for such as he, born under a fatal star, without a chance; yet he could not muster up the moral courage to keep away from her. He craved to see her, as an opium-eater craves for the drug; but the sight of her, instead of soothing, tortured him. He lingered at the door, with one foot on the step, his eyes on the ground. He had a walking-stick in his hand, and he scratched signs with the ferrule in the earth. 'Why should I see her?' he asked. 'The sight of her will make me miserable. But I shall be miserable if I do not see her. Why can I not tear myself away from this place and go to the other end of England? I cannot. My sister is dependent on me. All I had is sunk here, and here I must sink also.' He raised his dark eyes, full of threatening light, towards heaven, and muttered, 'Thou writest bitter things against me.'

Then, at the door, appeared Rose, looking pale and frightened, the laughter and light washed from her eyes.

'Mr. Penhalligan,' she said, 'come, come quickly, and see Mrs. Gaverock.'

In her eagerness she caught him by the arm, and drew him after her through the hall into the little parlour beyond, that

opened out of it—the one room that had a window with a southern aspect.

Mrs. Gaverock was there, crouched on the floor against the window-frame, her grey hair dishevelled and falling down her back. She put her hand over her face and forehead and through her hair with a curious mechanical motion, and with the other hand pointed to the window-frame, on which were little scratches and dates.

‘Con!’ said the old woman, ‘little Con! so high. Four years old to-day. Little Con! so high, five years old to-day!’ and she pointed to another notch or scratch. ‘My Con, my pretty boy, my pet, my darling, so high, six years old—that is—how long ago?’ She put her trembling left hand to her brow and shook her head, and brushed her forehead, and, unable to solve the question, went on: ‘What a brave, pretty fellow, so tall for eight—no—where was I? I must begin again, with the first score that was drawn to-day when he is three. Con! little Con! four years, or three years?’ She put her hand to her head. ‘Help me! which is it? Little Con, pretty boy, four years old to-day, and so high.’ She turned round, pointing, and looked at Dennis. Her eyes were dazed.

‘Miss Trehwella,’ said the young doctor, ‘go at once for assistance. You must take Mrs. Gaverock to bed and she must be bled.’ That was the panacea for all ills at the time of which we write. ‘Miss Rose, I will go home immediately, and return with my instruments and a composing draught. The shock has been too much for head and heart.’

When he had seen the broken-minded and broken-hearted mother taken to her room, Dennis hastened home.

At his garden gate, before he reached the house, he saw the figure of his sister standing looking up the path expectantly.

She was able to read nothing in his face as he came up; she took his arm, and looked questioningly into his dark lowering eyes.

‘Pas de chance,’ he said, ‘for us and for all with whom we are brought in contact. Mrs. Gaverock is ill; I must return at once to Towan and bleed her.’

Loveday’s lips quivered and her eyes became dim. She feared the worst. Had her brother good news he would not have tantalised her. He would have communicated it at once.

‘Mrs. Gaverock has had bad news, and it has crushed her, mentally and physically. I doubt if she will rally from it. Her

heart was set on one object, and—of course,' he said these words with concentrated bitterness, 'that object is taken from her. Loveday, there is but one lesson life teaches, care for no person and nothing. Be without a noble hope, without a great ambition—be as a beast, and rollick through life, and then life opens and laughs in response. Demand of it anything but what is common and base and you curse yourself with a career of misery.'

Loveday's quivering hand was in his, her swimming eyes on his.

'Sister,' he said, 'I have been told that the vulgar oyster when born has got eyes, and a faculty of seeing through them the world, and light and colour, and beauty. But the silt gets in and frets them away, and little by little it loses its eyes, and light and colour and beauty are no more for it, only a base, mud-life under water. The eyes were only given it that they might be taken away, and the remembrance of light be to it a lifelong repining. Every faculty we have is given us as a vehicle for suffering. Love, desire, cling to anything, and that thing is taken from you! There; go to your room and cry. The blight is on you. Constantine is dead.'

But she did not go. She grasped his hand tighter, and said, 'I have steeled my heart to hear this, Dennis. I acted very wrongly and Constantine very foolishly. That is over. Let the past be past. Let the whole secret remain a secret. Now it need be known to none but ourselves. I can weep for him in my own chamber; I do not care that the world should know why.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNSPOKEN TONGUE.

DENNIS PENHALLIGAN and Rose Trehwella were standing together in the hall by the window. The light struck in on his dark face, and Rose could not fail to notice how handsome it was. He had asked her to follow him downstairs from the sick-room of Mrs. Gaverock. In spite of her playful and flippant manner with him, Rose stood in awe of the young surgeon. To one thoughtless, without a trouble, full of exuberant spirit, there is something impressive in the character of a man who is intellectual, strong of purpose or passion, and weather-buffed by adversity.

'Miss Rose,' he said, leaning his elbow on the sill of the

window, and crossing his feet, which he lashed with his riding whip, 'I should like to send Loveday to take your place beside Mrs. Gaverock.'

'Why so?' asked the girl with a flush of hurt feeling, and with eyebrows lifted in surprise. 'Do I not care for her to the best of my power?'

'To the best of your power—yes,' answered Dennis. He did not look in her face, his dark eyes were fixed on his boots. 'But you have not that in you which the patient requires.'

'What is that?'

'Sympathy.'

'There you are out of your reckoning, Mr. Penhalligan, I am full of love and tenderness to dear aunt. She can never say of me that I neglect her.'

'You do not neglect her,' answered Dennis, 'but you do not understand what the aching heart requires. You endeavour to cheer her, to interest her with descriptions of this, that, and another, lively and entertaining, but unsuitable. You fret her much as she might be fretted by a pretty moth that fluttered over her face, or by the flicker of shining water in her weary eyes. She does not ask to be entertained, she does not want distraction. What she needs is companionship cooling as evening dew, soft as silver moonlight. You have never known sorrow, you have had no experience of the anguish of losing that about which all your heart fibres have been laced. You are incapable of helping her. The will is not wanting, what lacks is the faculty. Do not grieve that you have not got it. The faculty grows, like the blossom on the apple-tree which is beaten to make it bloom. Every bruise produces a flower, and every flower a fruit.'

Rose's clear blue eyes were on him, watching his expressive face. Her pretty lips half pouted, half inclined to turn down at the corners.

'How has Loveday gained the experience that is denied me?'

'I cannot tell you how,' answered Dennis: 'it suffices that she has. You will see that the poor old lady will cling to her, but without turning from you. You tease her. You are restless, eager to be doing something for her, to stir up her mind to foreign interests. She desires to be let alone, to be wept with, to have no word spoken to her ear, but to feel the pity of a true, loving heart, speaking to her in a voiceless, altogether mysterious way.'

'You think very badly of me, doctor.'

‘Not at all.’ He looked up suddenly. ‘Heaven knows how highly I think of you, too highly for my own happiness. But let that pass. No, Miss Rose. It is not so. Can you talk Hindustani?’

‘I—Hindustani? No.’

‘Why not?’

‘Because, for a very simple reason, I have never learned it.’

‘Why have you not learned it?’

‘I have had no occasion for it,’ answered Rose impatiently, and colour came in two bright spots into her cheeks. She stamped her little foot, ‘What do you mean by this, Mr. Penhalligan?’

‘This is my meaning, Miss Trewhella. Hearts have their languages as well as lips. You cannot converse with a Hindu, because you cannot speak Hindustani; so you cannot commune with a sorrowful soul, because you do not know sorrow. Can you understand a Hindu in England, how he must yearn to hear his home tongue? In like way the sorrowful, sick heart longs to have converse with another that can speak and understand the language of which every word is a tear.’

Rose looked on the ground, and now the earnest eyes of Dennis were on her. Her lips were curling.

Presently, with a flush of triumph in her bright face, she looked up, and said impetuously—

‘I have taken you in your own toils, sir! You, you, who lecture me on lack of sympathy, how is it that it is precisely of you—of you that patients complain because you are unsympathetic? Answer me that, thou Man of Feeling.’

He shrugged his shoulders and considered. Then, with a scornful smile playing about his mouth, he replied, ‘Miss Trewhella, thou Lady *sans* Feeling, I will explain the riddle: for the same reason that you make a bad nurse. I am, perhaps, unsympathetic towards the sick, because I have never had a day’s illness—no aches have racked my bones or nerves. I have not even had a catarrh to make me snuffle in sympathy with him who has a cold in his head. My trials and troubles have not been of that sort, they have gone under another category.’

‘In what category, tell me?’ The question was impertinent, and Rose looked at him timidly, uncertain how he would take it.

‘It is useless my telling you. You would not understand me. Your life is one of unclouded happiness. You have never been in life’s battle, never have received bullets and barbs of iron in your

flesh which lie there unextracted, festering, and making existence an agony.'

'No, I have not had that experience, and I have no desire of acquiring it.'

'I hope you never may have it.'

'I should be afraid to send for you, were I sick,' said Rose; 'you would dissect my fibres as callously as if you were unripping a rush mat, and cut into my poor flesh as coldly as if you were slicing a melon. I should look up into your face in vain for pity.'

'Indeed, indeed no! If you were in suffering, I should be unable to touch you, not from callousness but from emotion. And you know that, and you speak thus because you know it will set all the threads of my soul quivering.' He passed his hand over his face. Rose saw she had gone too far; she rapidly changed the subject.

'Loveday,' she said, 'is full of tenderness to the sick. You are quite right in wishing to send her here to be with dear Aunt Gaverock.'

Then she said no more. Nor did he. After an awkward silence of a minute, she exclaimed brightly, as a thought flashed up in her mind, 'Now, Mr. Penhalligan, I am not going to let you off without chastisement. You have been hard on me, fluttering all my shortcomings, like the linen from the wash on lines on a Tuesday. I will not let you go without a last word, which is woman's prerogative; without a last touch, as in a game of prisoner's base.'

'Very well, touch me.'

'You will not be angry?'

'How can I, when you set me the example of bearing sharp instruction with so sweet an air?'

'Then be lamb-like now, Mr. Dennis, and listen to reproof. What I want to say is this. It does seem to my stupid head that both you and Loveday have gone through a rough school.'

'Yes, it is so—she and I alike.'

'And it seems to me that the same master, and the same teaching, and the same rod, have sent you out very diverse into the world.'

'Go on,' he said, looking intently at her as she spoke.

'She has been sweetened by her sorrows, and you—sourer.' He made no reply.

'I suppose the bruise does not always become a blossom on the apple-tree—sometimes a canker,' she said.

Then the door burst open, and Hender Gaverock and Gerans

entered, the former stamping, shaking himself, and diffusing a chill air, a smell of the sea, and a sense of salt.

‘Hullo! Doctor! you here? How is my lady? Got over her hysterics yet? Here am I back, pickled in brine, and tough as tanned hide. I had a near touch this time, though, and if I hadn’t made up my mind not to be drowned I should have followed David and Con to Davy Jones’s locker. I held on to the keel with fingers and toes and with every claw of my will, which can grip like a crab. How is the mistress? I am very sorry about poor Con. Better, however, to have swallowed too much salt water than to be smothered in law-dust. Poor fellow! I’m as sorry as a man can be at his loss. However, that which can’t be cured must be taken as it comes, as the cook said of the pork in summer, when the pig was killed. I am sure I am as disturbed about Con as a father can be, but I don’t go into hysterics. That is the way of women. Humour them, and they come round in time. I’ll tell you what. If poor Con’s body had been recovered, and we could have had a decent burial with cake and ale, and hatbands and scarves, the old lady would have rather liked it, and have been hopping about like a winged magpie. It is nothing but the lack of a burial which makes her take to her bed. I am sixty-five. I know women.’

‘Whither are you going, Mr. Gaverock? Not up to your wife’s room?’ exclaimed Penhalligan.

‘Yes, I am. What stands in the way? She’ll be glad to hear particulars. It will rouse her out of her fit of hysterics.’

‘I must beg, my dear sir, that you do not disturb her now. She must be soothed, not excited. This is not a case of hysterics by any means.’

‘Don’t you suppose she will be impatient to hear of poor Con, how he managed the sheet? He’d not forgotten that. I was half afraid of trusting it into his hand, but we were capsized through no fault of his. We went over and the sail was full of water. There was no help for it. Con and I fought a gallant fight; he ought to be here now, but is so much younger than me that he has not my strength.’

‘You must not go to Auntie,’ said Rose. ‘I am about to run to Nantsillan myself for Loveday, as I only disturb and irritate aunt. Loveday is the proper medicine and nurse for her.’

‘Very well! very well!’ said the old man impatiently. ‘Pshaw! the house smells of medicine bottles. Come out into the fresh

air, Gerans. Sickness makes a whole house stuffy. Besides, I want to see the horse you bought at Wadebridge Fair.'

When the Squire and his son had left the hall, Rose said, 'Mr. Penhalligan, I think I understand what you mean by the unspoken language. I do not think my uncle and aunt have that speech in common.'

'Mr. Gaverock,' answered Dennis, 'has so crushed out all exhibition of sensibility in himself, and laughed and scorned it out of others, that he dare not show his true feelings. I have little doubt that he is more sensible of his son's death than he allows others to see. As he has checked in himself and in those about him every token of feeling, he has lost the capability to sympathise with suffering.'

Half an hour later Loveday Penhalligan arrived. Rose thought her looking very unwell, she was so pale, and her eyes sunken. She asked her if she were ailing. Loveday shook her head. She even tried to smile, but failed.

Loveday wore a dark navy-blue cloth gown, and a white kerchief about her neck crossed over her bosom and pinned behind. Her hair was plain, drawn back into a knot, and covered by a white cap. Her sleeves were to her elbows, where they were frilled, and she wore long black mittens. Her features were not regular and classical, and she had an olive complexion; but there was a sweetness in her expression which made every one say she was pretty—some declared she was beautiful. Her eyes were, however, her great charm, large, deep, soft, and full of feeling; eyes into which any one might look, and which spoke as eyes can speak of a patient, loving, and meek soul. Dennis saw that she did not assume a black gown, though she had one, and he knew, thereby, that she was resolved to have her secret kept. It would be more precious, more holy to her, if hidden in the depths of her faithful soul. She was not one who cried out for sympathy. She was happiest in keeping her joys and sorrows to herself, or sharing them only with her brother. They were desecrated when made public. She was reticent and retiring without being dull and shy. She never pushed herself into, or in society. She had to be sought out; but when found, and brought into conversation, her intelligence, her pleasant humour, and kindness made her very attractive. The men all liked her, and the girls were not jealous.

Mrs. Gaverock's wan, troubled face kindled the moment she entered her room. Loveday drew a chair by her bedside and took the old lady's hand in hers and kissed it respectfully.

Mrs. Gaverock said nothing, but lay looking at her. Her eyes were no longer mazed, her reason had returned ; but she was very weak, and unable to speak above a whisper. But she was thinking, and thinking of one thing, her great loss ; every now and then a tear trickled from her eye, and she was too weak or unconscious to put up her hand to wipe it away. Loveday saw this at once, and with her handkerchief very gently dried each tear as it welled out of the faded eyes. Towards sunset the girl was startled by the old woman putting out her disengaged hand and trying to draw herself up by the bed-post.

‘Can I help you?’ asked Loveday, putting her arms round her and raising her.

‘Con said,’ whispered Mrs. Gaverock—‘Con said he was married.’

Loveday’s hand that held that of the patient involuntarily quivered.

‘I have been looking at you,’ said the poor mother, ‘and I wished—oh, I have wished so much—that he had married you.’

Loveday hesitated for a moment ; her face became paler and her heart fluttered. Then she stooped, drew the old lady up in her bed ; she seated herself on it, so that Mrs. Gaverock could rest in her arms, and, putting her cheek against that of the old woman, said, ‘Your wish is fulfilled. He did take me.’

Two hours later Dennis returned. He found the Squire with Gerans and Rose at supper. The latter stood up, took a candle, and said, ‘I will go with you, Mr. Penhalligan, and relieve Loveday.’

She and the doctor entered the sick-room. Twilight had succeeded set of sun, and then darkness. When they entered with the light, they found Mrs. Gaverock lying in Loveday’s arms, asleep. Tears sparkled on her eyelashes, but her face was peaceful ; it had lost its despairing, distressed expression.

Loveday’s eyes were also wet, and there were glistening paths on her cheeks ; but she smiled gently at her brother and Rose as they entered, and held up her finger to impose on them silence. Dennis looked attentively at the sleeper, and then at his sister.

‘Mrs. Gaverock is better,’ he said in a low tone. ‘She has had better medicine than I could provide out of the Pharmacopœia.’ Then he turned to Rose and said in a still lower tone, audible only to her, ‘Do you now understand me when I refer to the unspoken, unwritten language?’

(To be continued.)

STRICTLY INCOG.

AMONG the reefs of rock upon the Australian coast, an explorer's dredge often brings up to the surface some tangled tresses of reddish seaweed, which, when placed for a while in a bucket of water, begin slowly to uncoil themselves as if endowed with animal life, and finally to swim about with a gentle tremulous motion in a mute inquiring way from side to side of the pail that contains them. Looked at closely with an attentive eye, the complex moving mass gradually resolves itself into two parts: one, a ruddy seaweed with long streaming fronds; the other, a strangely misshapen and dishevelled pipe-fish, exactly imitating the weed itself in form and colour. When removed from the water, this queer pipe-fish proves in general outline somewhat to resemble the well-known hippocampus or sea-horse of the aquariums, whose dried remains, in a mummified state, form a standing wonder in many tiny domestic museums. But the Australian species, instead of merely mimicking the knight on a chess-board, looks rather like a hippocampus in the most advanced stage of lunacy, with its tail and fins and the appendages of its spines flattened out into long thin streaming filaments, utterly indistinguishable in hue and shape from the fucus round which the creature clings for support with its prehensile tail. Only a rude and shapeless rough draught of a head, vaguely horse-like in contour, and inconspicuously provided with an unobtrusive snout and a pair of very unnoticeable eyes, at all suggests to the most microscopic observer its animal nature. Taken as a whole, nobody could at first sight distinguish it in any way from the waving weed among which it vegetates.

Clearly, this curious Australian cousin of the Mediterranean sea-horses has acquired so marvellous a resemblance to a bit of fucus in order to deceive the eyes of its ever-watchful enemies, and to become indistinguishable from the uneatable weed whose colour and form it so surprisingly imitates. Protective resemblances of the sort are extremely common among the pipe-fish family, and the reason why they should be so is no doubt sufficiently obvious at first sight to any reflecting mind—such, for example, as the intelligent reader's. Pipe-fish, as everybody

knows, are far from giddy. They do not swim in the vortex of piscine dissipation. Being mostly small and defenceless creatures, lurking among the marine vegetation of the shoals and reefs, they are usually accustomed to cling for support by their snake-like tails to the stalks or leaves of those submerged forests. The omniscient schoolboy must often have watched in aquariums the habits and manners of the common sea-horses, twisted together by their long, thin bodies into one inextricable mass of living matwork, or anchored firmly with a treble serpentine coil to some projecting branch of coralline or of quivering sea-wrack. Bad swimmers by nature, utterly unarmed, and wholly undefended by protective mail, the pipe-fish generally can neither fight nor run away; and therefore they depend entirely for their lives upon their peculiar skulking and lurking habits. Their one mode of defence is not to show themselves; discretion is the better part of their valour; they hide as much as possible among the thickest seaweed, and trust to Providence to escape observation.

Now, with any animals thus constituted, cowards by hereditary predilection, it must necessarily happen that the more brightly coloured or obtrusive individuals will most readily be spotted and most unceremoniously devoured by their sharp-sighted foes, the predatory fishes. On the other hand, just in proportion as any particular pipe-fish happens to display any chance resemblance in colour or appearance to the special seaweed in whose folds it lurks, to that extent will it be likely to escape detection, and to hand on its peculiarities to its future descendants. A long-continued course of the simple process thus roughly described must of necessity result at last in the elimination of all the most conspicuous pipe-fish, and the survival of all those unobtrusive and retiring individuals which in any respect happen to resemble the fucus or coralline among which they dwell. Hence, in many places, various kinds of pipe-fish exhibit an extraordinary amount of imitative likeness to the sargasso or seaweed to whose tags they cling; and in the three most highly developed Australian species the likeness becomes so ridiculously close that it is with difficulty one can persuade oneself one is really and truly looking at a fish, and not at a piece of strangely animated and locomotive fucus.

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of nature ; instances are to be found in abundance, not only among beasts, birds, reptiles, and fishes, but even among caterpillars, butterflies, and spiders, of species which preserve the strictest incognito. Everywhere in the world, animals and plants are perpetually masquerading in various assumed characters ; and sometimes their make-up is so exceedingly good as to take in for a while not merely the uninstructed ordinary observer, but even the scientific and systematic naturalist.

A few selected instances of such successful masquerading will perhaps best serve to introduce the general principles upon which all animal mimicry ultimately depends. Indeed, naturalists of late years have been largely employed in fishing up examples from the ends of the earth and from the depths of the sea for the elucidation of this very subject. There is a certain butterfly in the islands of the Malay Archipelago (its learned name, if anybody wishes to be formally introduced, is *Kallima paralekta*) which always rests among dead or dry leaves, and has itself leaf-like wings, all spotted over at intervals with wee speckles to imitate the tiny spots of fungi on the foliage it resembles. The well-known stick and leaf insects from the same rich neighbourhood in like manner exactly mimic the twigs and leaves of the forest among which they lurk : some of them look for all the world like little bits of walking bamboo, while others appear in all varieties of hue, as if opening buds and full-blown leaves and pieces of yellow foliage sprinkled with the tints and moulds of decay had of a sudden raised themselves erect upon six legs, and begun incontinently to perambulate the Malayan woodlands like vegetable Franksteins in all their glory. The larva of one such deceptive insect, observed in Nicaragua by sharp-eyed Mr. Belt, appeared at first sight like a mere fragment of the moss on which it rested, its body being all prolonged into little thread-like green filaments, precisely imitating the foliage around it. Once more, there are common flies which secure protection for themselves by growing into the counterfeit presentment of wasps or hornets, and so obtaining immunity from the attacks of birds or animals. Many of these curiously mimetic insects are banded with yellow and black in the very image of their stinging originals, and have their tails sharpened, *in terrorem*, into a pretended sting, to give point and verisimilitude to the deceptive resemblance. More curious still, certain South American butterflies of a perfectly inoffensive and edible family mimic in every spot and line of colour sundry

other butterflies of an utterly unrelated and fundamentally dissimilar type, but of so disagreeable a taste as never to be eaten by birds or lizards. The origin of these curious resemblances I shall endeavour to explain (after Messrs. Bates and Wallace) a little farther on : for the present it is enough to observe that the extraordinary resemblances thus produced have often deceived the very elect, and have caused experienced naturalists for a time to stick some deceptive specimen of a fly among the wasps and hornets, or some masquerading cricket into the midst of a cabinet full of saw-flies or ichneumons.

Let us look briefly at the other instances of protective coloration in nature generally which lead up to these final bizarre exemplifications of the masquerading tendency.

Wherever all the world around is remarkably uniform in colour and appearance, all the animals, birds, and insects alike necessarily disguise themselves in its prevailing tint to escape observation. It does not matter in the least whether they are predatory or defenceless, the hunters or the hunted : if they are to escape destruction or starvation, as the case may be, they must assume the hue of all the rest of nature about them. In the arctic snows, for example, all animals, without exception, must needs be snow-white. The polar bear, if he were brown or black, would immediately be observed among the unvaried ice-fields by his expected prey, and could never get a chance of approaching his quarry unperceived at close quarters. On the other hand, the arctic hare must equally be dressed in a snow-white coat, or the arctic fox would too readily discover him and pounce down upon him off-hand ; while, conversely, the fox himself, if red or brown, could never creep upon the unwary hare without previous detection, which would defeat his purpose. For this reason, the ptarmigan and the willow grouse become as white in winter as the vast snow-fields under which they burrow ; the ermine changes his dusky summer coat for the expensive wintry suit beloved of British Themis ; the snow-bunting acquires his milk-white plumage ; and even the weasel assimilates himself more or less in hue to the unvarying garb of arctic nature. To be out of the fashion is there quite literally to be out of the world ; no half-measures will suit the stern decree of polar biology ; strict compliance with the law of winter change is absolutely necessary to success in the struggle for existence.

Now, how has this curious uniformity of dress in arctic animals

been brought about? Why, simply by that unyielding principle of Nature which condemns the less adapted for ever to extinction, and exalts the better adapted to the high places of her hierarchy in their stead. The ptarmigan and the snow-buntings that look most like the snow have for ages been least likely to attract the unfavourable attention of arctic fox or prowling ermine; the fox or ermine that came most silently and most unperceived across the shifting drifts has been most likely to steal unawares upon the heedless flocks of ptarmigan and snow-bunting. In the one case protective colouring preserves the animal from himself being devoured; in the other case it enables him the more easily to devour others. And since 'Eat or be eaten' is the shrill sentence of nature upon all animal life, the final result is the unbroken whiteness of the arctic fauna in all its developments of fur or feather.

Where the colouring of nature is absolutely uniform, as among the arctic snows or the chilly mountain tops, the colouring of the animals is uniform too. Where it is slightly diversified from point to point, as in the sands of the desert, the animals that imitate it are speckled or diversified with various soft neutral tints. All the birds, reptiles, and insects of Sahara, says Canon Tristram, copy closely the grey or isabelline colour of the boundless sands that stretch around them. Lord George Campbell, in his amusing 'Log Letters from the "Challenger,"' mentions a butterfly on the shore at Amboyne which looked exactly like a bit of the beach, until it spread its wings and fluttered away gaily to leeward. Soles and other flat-fish similarly resemble the sands or banks on which they lie, and accommodate themselves specifically to the particular colour of their special bottom. Thus the flounder imitates the muddy bars at the mouths of rivers, where he loves to half bury himself in the congenial ooze; the sole, who rather affects clean hard sand-banks, is simply sandy and speckled with grey; the plaice, who goes in by preference for a bed of mixed pebbles, has red and yellow spots scattered up and down irregularly among the brown, to look as much as possible like agates and carnelians; the brill, who hugs a still rougher ledge, has gone so far as to acquire raised lumps or tubercles on his upper surface, which make him seem like a mere bit of the shingle-strewn rock on which he reposes. In short, where the environment is most uniform the colouring follows suit: just in proportion as the environment varies from place to place, the colouring must vary

in order to simulate it. There is a deep biological joy in the term 'environment'; it almost rivals the well-known consolatory properties of that sweet word 'Mesopotamia.' 'Surroundings,' perhaps, would equally well express the meaning, but then, as Mr. Wordsworth justly observes, 'the difference to me!'

Between England and the West Indies, about the time when one begins to recover from the first bout of sea-sickness, we come upon a certain sluggish tract of ocean, uninvaded by either Gulf Stream or arctic current, but slowly stagnating in a sort of endless eddy of its own, and known to sailors and books of physical geography as the Sargasso Sea. The sargasso or floating seaweed from which it takes its poetical name is a pretty yellow rootless alga, swimming in vast quantities on the surface of the water, and covered with tiny bladder-like bodies which at first sight might easily be mistaken for amber berries. If you drop a bucket over the ship's side and pull up a tangled mass of this beautiful seaweed, it will seem at first to be all plant alike; but when you come to examine its tangles closely, you will find that it simply swarms with tiny crabs, fishes, and shrimps, all coloured so precisely to shade that they look exactly like the sargasso itself. Here the colour about is less uniform than in the arctic snows, but, so far as the sargasso-haunting animals are concerned, it comes pretty much to the same thing. The floating mass of weed is their whole world, and they have had to accommodate themselves to its tawny hue under pain of death, immediate and violent.

Caterpillars and butterflies often show us a further step in advance in the direction of minute imitation of ordinary surroundings. Dr. Weissman has published a very long and learned memoir, fraught with the best German erudition and prolixity, upon this highly interesting and obscure subject. As English readers, however, not unnaturally object to trudging through a stout volume on the larva of the sphinx moth, conceived in the spirit of those patriarchal ages of Hilpa and Shalum, when man lived to nine hundred and ninety-nine years, and devoted a stray century or so without stint to the work of education, I shall not refer them to Dr. Weissman's original treatise, as well translated and still further enlarged by Mr. Raphael Meldola, but will present them instead with a brief *résumé*, boiled down and condensed into a patent royal elixir of learning. Your caterpillar, then, runs many serious risks in early life from the annoying persistence of sundry evil-disposed birds, who insist at inconvenient times in

picking him off the leaves of gooseberry bushes and other his chosen places of residence. His infant mortality, indeed, is something simply appalling, and it is only by laying the eggs that produce him in enormous quantities that his fond mother the butterfly ever succeeds in rearing on an average two of her brood to replace the imago generation just departed. Accordingly, the caterpillar has been forced by adverse circumstances to assume the most ridiculous and impossible disguises, appearing now in the shape of a leaf or stem, now as a bundle of dark-green pine needles, and now again as a bud or flower, all for the innocent purpose of concealing his whereabouts from the inquisitive gaze of the birds his enemies.

When the caterpillar lives on a plant like a grass, the ribs or veins of which run up and down longitudinally, he is usually striped or streaked with darker lines in the same direction as those on his native foliage. When, on the contrary, he lives upon broader leaves, provided with a midrib and branching veins, his stripes and streaks (not to be out of the fashion) run transversely and obliquely, at exactly the same angle as those of his wonted food-plant. Very often, if you take a green caterpillar of this sort away from his natural surroundings, you will be surprised at the conspicuousness of his pale lilac or mauve markings; surely, you will think to yourself, such very distinct variegation as that must betray him instantly to his watchful enemies. But no; if you replace him gently where you first found him, you will see that the lines exactly harmonise with the joints and shading of his native leaf: they are delicate representations of the soft shadow cast by a rib or vein, and the local colour is precisely what a painter would have had to use in order to produce the corresponding effect. The shadow of yellowish green is, of course, always purplish or lilac. It may at first sight seem surprising that a caterpillar should possess so much artistic sense and dexterity; but then the penalty for bungling or inharmonious work is so very severe as necessarily to stimulate his imitative genius. Birds are for ever hunting him down among the green leaves, and only those caterpillars which effectually deceive them by their admirable imitations can ever hope to survive and become the butterflies who hand on their larval peculiarities to after ages. Need I add that the variations are, of course, unconscious, and that accident in the first place is ultimately answerable for each fresh step in the direction of still closer simulation?

The geometric moths have brown caterpillars, which generally stand erect when at rest on the branches of trees, and so resemble small twigs; and in order that the resemblance may be the more striking, they are often covered with tiny warts which look like buds or knots upon the surface. The larva of that familiar and much-dreaded insect, the death's-head hawk-moth, feeds as a rule on the foliage of the potato, and its very varied colouring, as Sir John Lubbock has pointed out, so beautifully harmonises with the brown of the earth, the yellow and green of the leaves, and the faint purplish blue of the lurid flowers, that it can only be distinguished when the eye happens accidentally to focus itself exactly upon the spot occupied by the unobtrusive caterpillar. Other larvæ which frequent pine-trees have their bodies covered with tufts of green hairs that serve to imitate the peculiar pine foliage. One queer little caterpillar, which lives upon the hoary foliage of the sea-buckthorn, has a grey-green body, just like the buckthorn leaves, relieved by a very conspicuous red spot, which really represents in size and colour one of the berries that grow around it. Finally, the larva of the elephant hawk-moth, which grows to a very large size, has a pair of huge spots that seem like great eyes; and direct experiment establishes the fact that small birds mistake it for a young snake, and stand in terrible awe of it accordingly, though it is in reality a perfectly harmless insect, and also, as I am credibly informed (for I cannot speak upon the point from personal experience), a very tasty and well-flavoured insect, and 'quite good to eat' too, says an eminent authority. One of these big snake-like caterpillars once frightened Mr. Bates himself on the banks of the Amazon.

Now I know that cantankerous person, the universal objector, has all along been bursting to interrupt me and declare that he himself frequently finds no end of caterpillars, and has not the slightest difficulty at all in distinguishing them with the naked eye from the leaves and plants among which they are lurking. But observe how promptly we crush and demolish this very inconvenient and disconcerting critic. The caterpillars *he* finds are almost all hairy ones, very conspicuous and easy to discover—'woolly bears,' and such like common and unclean creatures; and the reason they take no pains to conceal themselves from his unobservant eyes is simply this: nobody on earth wants to discover them. For either they are protectively encased in horrid hairs, which get down your throat and choke you and bother you (I

speak as a bird, from the point of view of a confirmed caterpillar eater), or else they are bitter and nasty to the taste, like the larva of the spurge-moth and the machaon butterfly. These are the ordinary brown and red and banded caterpillars that the critical objector finds in hundreds on his peregrinations about his own garden—commonplace things which the experienced naturalist has long since got utterly tired of. But has your rash objector ever lighted upon that rare larva which lives among the periwinkles, and exactly imitates a periwinkle petal? Has he ever discovered those deceptive creatures which pretend for all the world to be leaves of lady's-bedstraw, or dress themselves up as flowers of buttonweed? Has he ever hit upon those immoral caterpillars which wriggle through life upon the false pretence that they are only the shadows of projecting ribs on the under surface of a full-grown lime leaf? No, not he; he passes them all by without one single glance of recognition; and when the painstaking naturalist who has hunted them every one down with lens and butterfly net ventures tentatively to describe their personal appearance, he comes up smiling with his great russet woolly bear comfortably nestling upon a green cabbage-leaf, and asks you in a voice of triumphant demonstration where is the trace of concealment or disguise in that amiable but very inedible insect. Go to, Sir Critic, I will have none of you; I only use you for a metaphorical marionette to set up and knock down again, as Mr. Punch in the street show knocks down the policeman who comes to arrest him, and the grimy black personage of sulphurous antecedents who pops up with a fizz through the floor of his apartment.

Queerer still than the caterpillars which pretend to be leaves or flowers for the sake of protection are those truly diabolical and perfidious Brazilian spiders which, as Mr. Bates observed, are brilliantly coloured with crimson and purple, but 'double themselves up at the base of leaf-stalks, so as to resemble flower-buds, and thus deceive the insects upon which they prey.' There is something hideously wicked and cruel in this lowest depth of imitative infamy. A flower-bud is something so innocent and childlike; and to disguise oneself as such for purposes of murder and rapine argues the final abyss of arachnoid perfidy. It reminds one of that charming and amiable young lady in Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Dynamiter,' who amused herself in moments of temporary gaiety by blowing up inhabited houses, inmates and all,

out of pure lightness of heart and girlish frivolity. An Indian mantis or praying insect, a little less wicked, though no less cruel than the spiders, deceives the flies who come to his arms under the false pretence of being a quiet leaf, upon which they may light in safety for rest and refreshment. Yet another abandoned member of the same family, relying boldly upon the resources of tropical nature, gets itself up as a complete orchid, the head and fangs being moulded in the exact image of the beautiful blossom, and the arms folding treacherously around the unhappy insect which ventures to seek for honey in its deceptive jaws.

Happily, however, the tyrants and murderers do not always have things all their own way. Sometimes the inoffensive prey turn the tables upon their torturers with distinguished success. For example, Mr. Wallace noticed a kind of sand-wasp, in Borneo, much given to devouring crickets; but there was one species of cricket which exactly reproduced the features of the sand-wasps, and mixed among them on equal terms without fear of detection. Mr. Belt saw a green leaf-like locust in Nicaragua, overrun by foraging ants in search of meat for dinner, but remaining perfectly motionless all the time, and evidently mistaken by the hungry foragers for a real piece of the foliage it mimicked. So thoroughly did this innocent locust understand the necessity for remaining still, and pretending to be a leaf under all advances, that even when Mr. Belt took it up in his hands it never budged an inch, but strenuously preserved its rigid leaf-like attitude. As other insects 'sham dead,' this ingenious creature shammed vegetable.

In order to understand how cases like these begin to arise, we must remember that first of all they start of necessity from very slight and indefinite resemblances, which succeed as it were by accident in occasionally eluding the vigilance of enemies. Thus, there are stick insects which only look like long round cylinders, not obviously stick-shaped, but rudely resembling a bit of wood in outline only. These imperfectly mimetic insects may often obtain a casual immunity from attack by being mistaken for a twig by birds or lizards. There are others, again, in which natural selection has gone a step further, so as to produce upon their bodies bark-like colouring and rough patches which imitate knots, wrinkles, and leaf-buds. In these cases the protection given is far more marked, and the chances of detection are proportionately lessened. But sharp-eyed birds, with senses quick-

ened by hunger, the true mother of invention, must learn at last to pierce such flimsy disguises, and suspect a stick insect in the most innocent-looking and apparently rigid twigs. The final step, therefore, consists in the production of that extraordinary actor, the *Xeroxylus laceratus*, whose formidable name means no more than 'ragged dry-stick,' and which really mimics down to the minutest particular a broken twig, overgrown with mosses, liverworts, and lichens.

Take, on the other hand, the well-known case of that predaceous mantis which exactly imitates the white ants, and, mixing with them like one of their own horde, quietly devours a stray fat termite or so, from time to time, as occasion offers. Here we must suppose that the ancestral mantis happened to be somewhat paler and smaller than most of its fellow-tribesmen, and so at times managed unobserved to mingle with the white ants, especially in the shade or under a dusky sky, much to the advantage of its own appetite. But the termites would soon begin to observe the visits of their suspicious friend, and to note their coincidence with the frequent mysterious disappearance of a fellow-townswoman, evaporated into space, like the missing young women in neat cloth jackets who periodically vanish from the London suburbs. In proportion as their reasonable suspicions increased, the termites would carefully avoid all doubtful-looking mantises; but, at the same time, they would only succeed in making the mantises which survived their inquisition grow more and more closely to resemble the termite pattern in all particulars. For any mantis which happened to come a little nearer the white ants in hue or shape would thereby be enabled to make a more secure meal upon his unfortunate victims; and so the very vigilance which the ants exerted against his vile deception would itself react in time against their own kind, by leaving only the most ruthless and indistinguishable of their foes to become the parents of future generations of mantises.

Once more, the beetles and flies of Central America must have learned by experience to get out of the way of the nimble Central American lizards with great agility, cunning, and alertness. But green lizards are less easy to notice beforehand than brown or red ones; and so the lizards of tropical countries are almost always bright green, with complementary shades of yellow, grey, and purple, just to fit them in with the foliage they lurk among. Everybody who has ever hunted the green tree-toads on the leaves

of waterside plants on the Riviera must know how difficult it is to discriminate these brilliant leaf-coloured creatures from the almost identical background on which they rest. Now, just in proportion as the beetles and flies grow still more cautious, even the green lizards themselves fail to pick up a satisfactory livelihood; and so at last we get that most remarkable Nicaraguan form, decked all round with leaf-like expansions, and looking so like the foliage on which it rests that no beetle on earth can possibly detect it. The more cunning you get your detectives, the more cunning do the thieves become to outwit them.

Look, again, at the curious life-history of the flies which dwell as unbidden guests or social parasites in the nests and hives of wild honey-bees. These burglarious flies are belted and bearded in the very selfsame pattern as the bumble-bees themselves; but their larvæ live upon the young grubs of the hive, and repay the unconscious hospitality of the busy workers by devouring the future hope of their unwilling hosts. Obviously, any fly which entered a beehive could only escape detection and extermination at the hands (or stings) of its outraged inhabitants, provided it so far resembled the real householders as to be mistaken at a first glance by the invaded community for one of its own numerous members. Thus any fly which showed the slightest superficial resemblance to a bee might at first be enabled to rob honey for a time with comparative impunity, and to lay its eggs among the cells of the helpless larvæ. But when once the vile attempt was fairly discovered, the burglars could only escape fatal detection from generation to generation just in proportion as they more and more closely approximated to the shape and colour of the bees themselves. For, as Mr. Belt has well pointed out, while the mimicking species would become naturally more numerous from age to age, the senses of the mimicked species would grow sharper and sharper by constant practice in detecting and punishing the unwelcome intruders.

It is only in external matters, however, that the appearance of such mimetic species can ever be altered. Their underlying points of structure and formative detail always show to the very end (if only one happens to observe them) their proper place in a scientific classification. For instance, these same parasitic flies which so closely resemble bees in their shape and colour have only one pair of wings apiece, like all the rest of the fly order, while the bees of course have the full complement of two pairs, an upper

and an under, possessed by them in common with all other well-conducted members of the hymenopterous family. So, too, there is a certain curious American insect, belonging to the very unsavoury tribe which supplies London lodging-houses with one of their most familiar entomological specimens; and this cleverly disguised little creature is banded and striped in every part exactly like a local hornet, for whom it evidently wishes itself to be mistaken. If you were travelling in the wilder parts of Colorado you would find a close resemblance to Buffalo Bill was no mean personal protection. Hornets, in fact, are insects to which birds and other insectivorous animals prefer to give a very wide berth, and the reason why they should be imitated by a defenceless beetle must be obvious to the intelligent student. But while the vibrating wing-cases of this deceptive masquerader are made to look as thin and hornet-like as possible, in all underlying points of structure any competent naturalist would see at once that the creature must really be classed among the noisome Hemiptera. I seldom trouble the public with a Greek or Latin name, but on this occasion I trust I may be pardoned for not indulging in all the ingenuous bluntness of the vernacular.

Sometimes this effective mimicry of stinging insects seems to be even consciously performed by the tiny actors. Many creatures, which do not themselves possess stings, nevertheless endeavour to frighten their enemies by assuming the characteristic hostile attitudes of wasps or hornets. Everybody in England must be well acquainted with those common British earwig-looking insects, popularly known as the devil's coach-horses, which, when irritated or interfered with, cock up their tails behind them in the most aggressive fashion, exactly reproducing the threatening action of an angry scorpion. Now, as a matter of fact, the devil's coach-horse is quite harmless, but I have often seen, not only little boys and girls, but also chickens, small birds, and shrew-mice, evidently alarmed at his minatory attitude. So, too, the bumble-bee flies, which are inoffensive insects got up in sedulous imitation of various species of wild bee, flit about and buzz angrily in the sunlight, quite after the fashion of the insects they mimic; and when disturbed they pretend to get excited, and seem as if they wished to fly in their assailant's face and roundly sting him. This curious instinct may be put side by side with the parallel instinct of shamming dead, possessed by many beetles and other small defenceless species.

Certain beetles have also been modified so as exactly to imitate wasps; and in these cases the beetle waist, usually so solid, thick, and clumsy, grows as slender and graceful as if the insects had been supplied with corsets by a fashionable West End house. But the greatest refinement of all is perhaps that noticed in certain allied species which mimic bees, and which have acquired useless little tufts of hair on their hind shanks to represent the dilated and tufted pollen-gathering apparatus of the true bees.

I have left to the last the most marvellous cases of mimicry of all—those noticed among South American butterflies by Mr. Bates, who found that certain edible kinds exactly resembled a handsome and conspicuous but bitter-tasted species 'in every shade and stripe of colour.' Several of these South American imitative insects long deceived the very entomologists; and it was only by a close inspection of their structural differences that the utter distinctness of the mimickers and the mimicked was satisfactorily settled. Scarcely less curious is the case of Mr. Wallace's Malayan orioles, two species of which exactly copy two pugnacious honey-suckers in every detail of plumage and coloration. As the honey-suckers are avoided by birds of prey, owing to their surprising strength and pugnacity, the orioles gain immunity from attack by their close resemblance to the protected species. When Dr. Sclater, the distinguished ornithologist, was examining Mr. Forbes's collections from Timorlaut, even his experienced eye was so taken in by another of these deceptive bird-mimicries that he classified two birds of totally distinct families as two different individuals of the same species.

Even among plants a few instances of true mimicry have been observed. In the stony African Karoo, where every plant is eagerly sought out for food by the scanty local fauna, there are tubers which exactly resemble the pebbles around them; and I have little doubt that our perfectly harmless English dead-nettle secures itself from the attacks of browsing animals by its close likeness to the wholly unrelated, but well-protected, stinging-nettle.

Finally, we must not forget the device of those animals which not merely assimilate themselves in colour to the ordinary environment in a general way, but have also the power of adapting themselves at will to whatever object they may happen to lie against. Cases like that of the ptarmigan, which in summer harmonises with the brown heather and grey rock, while in winter

it changes to the white of the snow-fields, lead us up gradually to such ultimate results of the masquerading tendency. There is a tiny crustacean, the chameleon shrimp, which can alter its hue to that of any material on which it happens to rest. On a sandy bottom it appears grey or sand-coloured; when lurking among seaweed it becomes green, or red, or brown, according to the nature of its momentary background. Probably the effect is quite unconscious, or at least involuntary, like blushing with ourselves—and nobody ever blushes on purpose, though they do say a distinguished poet once complained that an eminent actor did not follow his stage directions because he omitted to obey the rubrical remark, 'Here Harold purples with anger.' The change is produced by certain automatic muscles which force up particular pigment cells above the others, green coming to the top on a green surface, red on a ruddy one, and brown or grey where the circumstances demand them. Many kinds of fish similarly alter their colour to suit their background by forcing forward or backward certain special pigment-cells known as chromatophores, whose various combinations produce at will almost any required tone or shade. Almost all reptiles and amphibians possess the power of changing their hue in accordance with their environment in a very high degree; and among certain tree-toads and frogs it is difficult to say what is the normal colouring, as they vary indefinitely from buff and dove-colour to chocolate-brown, rose, and even lilac.

But of all the particoloured reptiles the chameleon is by far the best known, and on the whole the most remarkable for his inconstancy of coloration. Like a lacertine Vicar of Bray, he varies incontinently from buff to blue, and from blue back to orange again, under stress of circumstances. The mechanism of this curious change is extremely complex. Tiny corpuscles of different pigments are sometimes hidden in the depths of the chameleon's skin, and sometimes spread out on its surface in an interlacing network of brown or purple. In addition to this prime colouring matter, however, the animal also possesses a normal yellow pigment, and a bluish layer in the skin which acts like the iridium glass so largely employed by Dr. Salviati, being seen as straw-coloured with a transmitted light, but assuming a faint lilac tint against an opaque absorbent surface. While sleeping the chameleon becomes almost white in the shade, but if light falls upon him he slowly darkens by an automatic process. The movements

of the corpuscles are governed by opposite nerves and muscles, which either cause them to bury themselves under the true skin, or to form an opaque ground behind the blue layer, or to spread out in a ramifying mass on the outer surface, and so produce as desired almost any necessary shade of grey, green, black, or yellow. It is an interesting fact that many chrysalids undergo precisely similar changes of colour in adaptation to the background against which they suspend themselves, being grey on a grey surface, green on a green one, and even half black and half red when hung up against pieces of particoloured paper.

Nothing could more beautifully prove the noble superiority of the human intellect than the fact that while our grouse are russet-brown to suit the bracken and heather, and our caterpillars green to suit the lettuce and the cabbage leaves, our British soldier should be wisely coated in brilliant scarlet to form an effective mark for the rifles of an enemy. Red is the easiest of all colours at which to aim from a great distance; and its selection by authority for the uniform of unfortunate Tommy Atkins reminds me of nothing so much as Mr. McClelland's exquisite suggestion that the peculiar brilliancy of the Indian river carps makes them serve 'as a better mark for kingfishers, terns, and other birds which are destined to keep the number of these fishes in check.' The idea of Providence and the Horse Guards conspiring to render any creature an easier target for the attacks of enemies is worthy of the decadent school of natural history, and cannot for a moment be dispassionately considered by a judicious critic. Nowadays we all know that the carp are decked in crimson and blue to please their partners, and that soldiers are dressed in brilliant red to please—the æsthetic authorities who command them from a distance.

THE DUCHESS OF KINGSTON.

ELIZABETH CHUDLEIGH, Countess of Bristol and Duchess of Kingston, who was tried for bigamy in Westminster Hall by the Peers in 1776, was, it can hardly be doubted, the original from whom Thackeray drew his detailed portrait of Beatrix Esmond, both as young Trix and as the old Baroness Bernstein; nor can one doubt that what he knew of his prototype was taken from that scandalous little book, 'An Authentic Detail of Particulars relative to the late Duchess of Kingston,' published by G. Kearsley in 1788. Thackeray not only reproduced some of the incidents of her life, but more especially caught the features of her character.

Poor Trix! Who does not remember her coming down the great staircase at Walcote, candle in hand, with her red stockings and a new cherry ribbon round her neck, her eyes like blue stars, her brown hair curling about her head, and not feel a lingering liking for the little coquette, trying to catch my Lord Mohun, and the Duke of Hamilton, and many another, and missing all? and for the naughty old baroness, with her scandalous stories, her tainted past, her love of cards, her perfect unscrupulousness, and yet with one soft corner in the withered heart for the young Virginians?

The famous, or infamous, Duchess has had hard measure dealt out to her, which she in part deserved; but some of the stories told of her are certainly not true, and one circumstance in her life, if true, goes far to palliate her naughtiness. Unfortunately, almost all we know of her is taken from unfriendly sources. The only really impartial source of information is the 'Trial,' published by order of the Peers, but that covers only one portion of her life, and one set of incidents.

Elizabeth Chudleigh was the daughter of Colonel Thomas Chudleigh, of Chelsea, and his wife Henrietta, who was his first cousin, the fourth daughter of Hugh Chudleigh, of Chalmington, in Dorset. Thomas was the only brother of Sir George Chudleigh, fourth baronet of Asheton, in Devon. As Sir George left only daughters, Thomas, the brother of Elizabeth, whose baptism in 1718 is recorded in the Chelsea registers, succeeded as fifth baronet in 1738. Unfortunately the Chelsea registers do not give

the baptism of Elizabeth, and we are not able to state her precise age, about which there is some difference. Her father had a post in Chelsea College, but apparently she was not born there. There can, however, be little doubt that she saw the light for the first time in 1726, and not in 1720, as is generally asserted.

Her family was one of great antiquity in the county of Devon, and was connected by marriage with the first families of the west of England. The old seat, Asheton, lies in a pleasant coombe under the ridge of Haldon; some remains of the old mansion, and venerable trees of the park, linger on; and in the picturesque parish church, perched on a rock in the valley, are many family monuments and heraldic emblazonments of the Chudleigh lions, gules on an ermine field. Elizabeth lost her father very early, and the widow was left on a poor pension to support and advance the prospects of her two children. Though narrowed in fortune, Mrs. Chudleigh had good connections, and she availed herself of these to push her way in the world.

At the age of sixteen—that is, in 1743—Elizabeth was given the appointment of maid of honour to the Princess of Wales, through the favour of Mr. Pulteney, afterwards Earl of Bath. She was then not only remarkable for her beauty, delicacy of complexion, and sparkling eyes, but also for the brilliancy of her wit and the liveliness of her humour. Even her rival, the Marquise de la Touche, of whom more hereafter, bears testimony to her charms. Pulteney, himself a witty, pungent, and convivial man, was delighted with the cleverness of the lovely girl, and amused himself with drawing it out. In after years, when she was asked for the secret of her sparkling repartee, she replied, ‘I always aim to be short, clear, and surprising.’

The Princess of Wales, Augusta, daughter of Frederick of Saxe-Gotha, who with the Prince, Frederick Lewis, had their court at Leicester House, became greatly attached to her young maid of honour. The beautiful Miss Chudleigh was speedily surrounded by admirers, among whom was James, sixth Duke of Hamilton, born in 1724, and therefore two years her senior.

According to the ‘Authentic Detail,’ the Duke obtained from her a solemn engagement that, on his return from a tour on the Continent which he was about to take, she would become his wife. Then he departed, having arranged for a mutual correspondence.

In the summer of 1744 she went on a visit to Lainston, near

Southampton, to her maternal aunt, Anne Hanmer, who was then living at the house of Mr. Merrill, the son of another aunt, Susanna, who was dead. Mrs. Hanmer, a widow, kept house for her nephew, who was Squire. At the Winchester races, to which she went with a party, Elizabeth met Lieutenant Hervey, second son of the late John, Lord Hervey, and grandson of the Earl of Bristol. Lieutenant Hervey, who was in the 'Cornwall,' then lying at Portsmouth, a vessel in Sir John Daver's squadron, was born in 1724, and therefore two years the senior of Elizabeth; indeed, at the time he was only just twenty.¹ He was fascinated with the beautiful girl, and asked leave to visit Lainston and pay his addresses. According to the 'Authentic Detail,' he was a favourite with Mrs. Hanmer.

'To this gentleman Mrs. Hanmer became so exceedingly partial that she favoured his views on her niece, and engaged her efforts to effect, if possible, a matrimonial connection. There were two difficulties which would have been insurmountable if not opposed by the fertile genius of a female: Miss Chudleigh disliked Captain Hervey, and she was betrothed to the Duke of Hamilton. To render this last nugatory, the letters of his Grace were intercepted by Mrs. Hanmer, and his supposed silence giving offence to her niece, she worked so successfully on her pride as to induce her to abandon all thoughts of the lover whose passion she had cherished with delight.'

Is this story true? At first sight it seems incredible that Mrs. Hanmer should have urged on her niece to throw over such a splendid prospect of family advancement as that offered by marriage with the Duke of Hamilton, for the sake of an impetuous young sailor who was without the means of supporting his wife, and who had not the smallest expectations of succeeding to the earldom of Bristol.

But we see from the sequel that Mrs. Hanmer's folly, and worse than folly, was so gross that it is not possible to build any conjecture on her judgment. It is allowable to hope that the story of the engagement to the Duke of Hamilton, broken through the intrigues of the aunt, is true, as it forms some excuse for the after conduct of Elizabeth Chudleigh.

That the poor girl had no liking for the young man is abundantly

¹ The Attorney-General stated at the trial that he was seventeen, but this was not the case; he was born May 19, 1724. Hervey gave his age wrongly in the suit for jactitation of marriage.

dantly clear. How the marriage was brought about, if we reject the story in the 'Authentic Detail,' must ever remain a mystery.

The Attorney-General, in the trial, said that Mrs. Hanmer urged on the match 'as advantageous to her niece;' but advantageous it certainly was not, and gave no prospect of being.

In August, Augustus John Hervey got leave from his ship, and came to Lainston.

'Lainston is a small parish, the value of the living being 15*l.* a year; Mr. Merrill's the only house in it, and the parish church at the end of his garden. On the 4th August, 1744, Mr. Amis, the then rector, was appointed to be at the church, alone, late at night. At eleven o'clock Mr. Hervey and Miss Chudleigh went out, as if to walk in the garden, followed by Mrs. Hanmer, her servant—Anne Craddock, Mr. Merrill, and Mr. Mountenay, which last carried a taper to read the service by. They found Mr. Amis in the church, according to his appointment, and there the service was celebrated, Mr. Mountenay holding the taper in his hat. The ceremony being performed, Mrs. Hanmer's maid was despatched to see that the coast was clear, and they returned into the house without being observed by any of the servants.'

This is the account of the wedding given at the trial by the Attorney-General, from the evidence of Anne Craddock, then the only surviving witness. The happiness of the newly married couple lasted but a few days—two, or at the outside three; and then Lieutenant Hervey left to rejoin his vessel, and in November sailed for the West Indies.

The 'Authentic Detail' declares that a violent quarrel ensued immediately on the marriage between the young people, and Elizabeth vowed never to associate with him again.

So little was the marriage to her present advantage that Elizabeth was unable to proclaim it, and thereby forfeit her situation as maid of honour to the Princess, with its pay and perquisites. Consequently, by her aunt's advice, she kept it concealed.

'Miss Chudleigh, now Mrs. Hervey—a maid in appearance, a wife in disguise—seemed, to those who judge from externals only, to be in an enviable situation. Of the higher circles she was the attractive centre, of gayer life the invigorating spirit. Her royal mistress not only smiled on, but actually approved her. A few friendships she cemented, and conquests she made in such abundance that, like Cæsar in a triumph, she had a train of captives at

her heels. Her husband, quieted for a time, grew obstreperous as she became more the object of admiration. He felt his right, and was determined to assert it. She endeavoured by letter to negotiate him into peace, but her efforts succeeded not. He demanded a private interview, and, enforcing his demands by threats of exposure in case of refusal, she complied through compulsion.'

The Duke of Hamilton returned from the grand tour, and he at once sought Elizabeth to know why his letters had not been answered. Then the fraud that had been practised on her was discovered, and the Duke laid his coronet at her feet. She was unable to accept the offer, and unable also to explain the reasons of her refusal. Rage at having been duped, disappointment at having lost the strawberry leaves, embittered Elizabeth, and stifled the germs of good principle in her.

After the Duke of Hamilton had been refused, and his visits to her house in Conduit Street prohibited, the Duke of Ancaster, Lord Howe, and other nobles made offers, and experienced a fate similar to that of his Grace of Hamilton. This astonished the fashionable world, and Mrs. Chudleigh, her mother, who was a stranger to the private marriage of her daughter, reprehended her folly with warmth.¹ To be freed from her embarrassments, Elizabeth resolved to travel. She embarked for the Continent, and visited Dresden, where she became an attached friend of the Electress of Saxony.

On her return to England she was subjected to her husband's annoyance. She could not forgive him the deception practised on her, though he was probably innocent of connivance in it.

'Captain Hervey, like a perturbed spirit, was eternally crossing the path trodden by his wife. Was she in the rooms at Bath? he was sure to be there. At a rout, ridotto, or ball, there was this fell destroyer of peace, embittering every pleasure and blighting the fruit of happiness by the pestilential malignity of his presence. As a proof of his disposition to annoy, he menaced his wife with an intimation that he would disclose the marriage to the Princess of Wales. In this Miss Chudleigh anticipated him by being the first relater of the circumstance. Her royal mistress heard and pitied her. She continued her patronage to the hour of her death.'

¹ Mrs. Chudleigh died in 1756, and in her will mentions her daughter by her maiden name.

In 1747¹ the Duke of Kingston saw her, and was captivated at once. Evelyn Pierrepont, Duke of Kingston, Marquis of Dorchester, Earl of Kingston, and Viscount Newark, was born in 1711. Horace Walpole says of him that he was 'a very weak man, of the greatest beauty and finest person in England.' He was Lord of the Bedchamber to King George II. He had been to Paris along with Lord Scarborough, taking with him an entire horse as a present to the Duke of Bourbon, and was unable to do this without a special Act of Parliament to allow it. The Duke of Bourbon, in return for the compliment, placed his palace at Paris and his château of Chantilly at the disposal of his visitor.

The Duke was young, handsome, wealthy, and unmarried, and a strong set was made at him by the young ladies of the French court; but of all the women he there met, none attracted his attention and engaged his heart but the Marquise de la Touche, a lady who had been married for ten years and was the mother of three children. He finally persuaded her to elope with him to England, where he very speedily grew cold towards her as he fell under the fascinations of Elizabeth Chudleigh. Afterwards, when the Marquise returned to France and was reconciled to her husband, she published her version of the story and the history of her rival, which was issued in 1786. Naturally she paints Elizabeth in the blackest colours.

Now follows an incident which is stated in the English accounts of the life of Elizabeth Chudleigh, but which did not transpire at the trial, and which is of doubtful truth.

She had become desperate, resolved at all hazard to break the miserable tie that bound her to Captain Hervey. She made a sudden descent on Lainston, visited the parsonage, and whilst Mr. Amis was kept in conversation with one of her attendants, she tore out the leaf of the register book that contained the entry of her marriage. In 1751 the Earl of Bristol died, and Captain Hervey's elder brother, George William, who was unmarried, succeeded to the title. In the winter of 1759 he fell ill, and there was a prospect of the Captain succeeding to the earldom. It now became the interest of Elizabeth Chudleigh to establish her claim to be his wife, and her right to the title of Countess. What follows is certain; the mutilation of the register previously, less so.

¹ Apparently, from a letter of M^{de}. de la Touche, but the Marquise does not name her rival, and some one else may have intervened before he admired Elizabeth.

She went at once to Winchester and sent for the wife of Mr. Amis, who had married her. She told Mrs. Amis that she wanted the register of her marriage to be made out. Mr. Amis then lay on his death-bed, but, nevertheless, she went to the rectory to obtain of him what she desired. What ensued shall be told in the words of Mrs. Amis at the trial.

‘I went up to Mr. Amis and told him her request. Then Mr. Merrill and the lady consulted together whom to send for, and they desired me to send for Mr. Spearing, the attorney. I did send for him, and during the time the messenger was gone the lady concealed herself in a closet; she said she did not care that Mr. Spearing should know that she was there. When Mr. Spearing came, Mr. Merrill produced a sheet of stamped paper that he brought to make the register upon. Mr. Spearing said it would not do; it must be a book, and that the lady must be at the making of it. Then I went to the closet and told the lady. Then the lady came to Mr. Spearing, and Mr. Spearing told the lady a sheet of stamped paper would not do, it must be a book. Then the lady desired Mr. Spearing to go and buy one. Mr. Spearing went and bought one, and when brought, the register was made. Then Mr. Amis delivered it to the lady; the lady thanked him, and said it might be an hundred thousand pounds in her way. Before Mr. Merrill and the lady left my house the lady sealed up the register and gave it to me, and desired I would take care of it until Mr. Amis’s death, and then deliver it to Mr. Merrill.’

The entries then made were these:—

2nd August, 1744, Mrs. Susanna Merrill, relict of John Merrill, Esq., buried.

4th August, 1744, married, the Honourable Augustus Hervey, Esq., in the parish church of Lainston, to Miss Elizabeth Chudleigh, daughter of Col. Thomas Chudleigh, late of Chelsea College, deceased, by me, Thos. Amis.

Contrary to expectation, the Earl of Bristol recovered.

The question now comes up—did Elizabeth destroy the former entry? It is hardly credible that the marriage could have been solemnised in 1744 without the register being signed; that neither parson, nor bride, nor bridegroom, nor the bride’s aunt who had urged on the marriage, nor the two gentlemen who were witnesses, should have not thought of the necessity for having the wedding properly registered. It is probable that the book was kept in Mr. Merrill’s house, as the rector of Lainston held Sparshot as well, and as the book afterwards was certainly kept at the hall.

It is also certain that in 1759 there was no register book of the parish of Lainston extant, and a fresh one was bought, in which was entered a burial as well as the marriage.

If a registration of the marriage had been made in 1744, and with all the levity of the proceeding it is still hardly conceivable that it should be omitted, it is equally certain that it, and the book in which it was made, had disappeared in 1759. It is quite possible that Mrs. Hanmer or Mr. Merrill might have got rid of it when they saw how unfortunate were the results of their plot, and what brilliant prospects opened before their relative if only this marriage could be treated as never having taken place. But that Elizabeth tore out the leaf whilst diverting the attention of the parson is not true, for the old register was not produced at the trial, and it is non-existent at the present day. The newly bought register continued to be used, and contained other Merrill and some Bathurst entries.

But to return to the order of events since the amour of the Duke of Kingston, and his falling under the influence of Elizabeth Chudleigh.

In 1751 the Prince of Wales died, and this necessitated a rearrangement of the household of the Princess. Elizabeth was re-appointed maid of honour to her, still in her maiden name. Soon after—that is, in 1752—the Duke of Hamilton married the beautiful Miss Gunning.¹

The Duke of Kingston—the third Duke to do so—offered his coronet to Elizabeth, and with intense mortification she was forced to decline it. ‘Remarried, as it were, by her own stratagem,’ says the author of the ‘Authentic Details,’ ‘the participation of ducal honours became legally impossible. The chains of wedlock, which the lady had been so industrious in shaking off or putting on, as seemed most promotive of her avarice, were now galling to an excess. Every advice was taken, without the means of liberation being in the power of human device to suggest. To acquiesce in that which could not be remedied seemed the *dernier ressort*. The Duke of Kingston’s attachment was ardent and truly sincere.’

¹ Horace Walpole asserts in 1749 and 1750 that the king was at her feet. ‘He has had a hankering these two years. Her life, which is now of thirty years’ standing, has been a little historic. Why should not experience and a charming face on her side, and near seventy years on his, produce a title?’ ‘There is no keeping off age,’ he writes in 1767, ‘as Miss Chudleigh does, by sticking roses and sweet peas in one’s hair.’

To prove his sincerity he entirely broke off all relations with the Marquise de la Touche, who returned to France covered with chagrin and humiliation.

At last the bonds of a marriage in which he was never allowed even to speak with his wife became intolerable to Captain Hervey; and some negotiations were entered into between them, whereby it was agreed that she should institute a suit in the Consistory Court of the Bishop of London for the jactitation of the marriage, and that he should not produce evidence to establish it. The case came on in the Michaelmas term, 1768, and was in form proceedings to restrain the Hon. Augustus John Hervey from asserting that Elizabeth Chudleigh was his wife, 'to the great danger of his soul's health, no small prejudice to the said Hon. Elizabeth Chudleigh, and pernicious example of others.'

There was a counter-suit of Captain Hervey against her, in which he asserted that in 1743 or 1744, being then a minor of the age of seventeen or eighteen, he had contracted himself in marriage to Elizabeth Chudleigh, and she to him; and that they had been married in the house of Mr. Merrill, on August 9, 1744, at eleven o'clock at night, by the Rev. Thomas Amis, since deceased, and in the presence of Mrs. Hanmer and Mr. Mountenay, also both deceased.

As will be seen, the counter-libel was incorrectly drawn. The marriage had not taken place in the house, but in the church; Mr. Hervey was aged twenty, not seventeen or eighteen; and Anne Craddock, the sole surviving witness of the ceremony, was not mentioned. The register of the marriage was not produced,¹ and no serious attempt was made to establish it. Accordingly, on February 10, 1769, sentence was given, declaring the marriage form gone through in 1744 to have been null and void, and to restrain Mr. Hervey from asserting his claim to be husband to Miss Elizabeth Chudleigh, and condemning him in costs to the sum of one hundred pounds.

As the Attorney-General said at her subsequent trial, 'a grosser artifice, I believe, than this suit was never fabricated.'

On March 8, 1769, the Duke of Kingston married Elizabeth Chudleigh by special licence from the Archbishop, the minister

¹ Mr. John Merrill died February 1767, and his burial was entered in it. Mr. Bathurst, who had married his daughter, found the register book in the hall, and handed it over to the rector, Mr. Kinchin. Nevertheless it was not produced at the hearing of the case for jactitation in the Consistory Court.

who performed it being the Rev. Samuel Harpur, of the British Museum; and the Prince (afterwards George III.) and Princess of Wales wore favours on the occasion.

No attempt was made during the lifetime of the Duke to dispute the legality of the marriage. The fortune was not entailed: his Grace had, therefore, the option to bequeath it as seemed best to his inclination. His nearest of kin was Mr. Evelyn Meadows, son of Lady Frances Pierrepont, sister of the Duke.

On September 23, 1773, the Duke died. The Duchess had anticipated his death. He had already made his will, bequeathing to her the entire income of his estates during her life, subject to the proviso that she remained in a state of widowhood. This did not at all please the Duchess, and directly she saw that her husband was dying she sent for a solicitor, a Mr. Field, to draw up a new will, omitting the obnoxious proviso: she was only by two years on the right side of fifty, and might marry again. When Mr. Field was introduced to the Duke, he saw that the dying man was not in a mental condition capable of executing a will, and he refused to have anything to do with an attempt to extort his signature from him. The Duchess was very angry; but the refusal of Mr. Field was most fortunate for her, as, had the will proposed been executed, it would most indubitably have been set aside.

As soon as the Duke was dead the dowager Duchess determined to enjoy life. She had a pleasure yacht built, placed in command of it an officer who had served in the navy, fitted it up with every luxury, sailed for Italy, and visited Rome, where the Pope and the cardinals received her with great courtesy. Indeed, she was given up one of the palaces of the cardinals for her residence. Whilst she was amusing herself in Italy something happened in England that was destined to materially spoil her happiness. Anne Craddock was still alive, the sole witness of her marriage that survived. She was in bad circumstances, and applied to Mr. Field for pecuniary relief. He refused it, but the Duchess sent to offer her twenty guineas per annum. This Anne Craddock refused, and gave intimation to Mr. Evelyn Meadows that she had information of importance which she could divulge.

When Mr. Meadows heard what Anne Craddock had to say, he set the machinery of the law in motion to obtain the prosecution of the Duchess, in the hopes of convicting her of bigamy, and then of upsetting the will of the late Duke in her favour. A bill of indictment for bigamy was preferred against her; the bill was

found, Mr. Field had notice of the procedure, and the Duchess was advised to return instantly to England and appear to the indictment, to prevent an outlawry.

At this time—that is, in 1775—the Earl of Bristol died without issue, and Augustus John, her first husband, succeeded to the title.

The anxieties of the Duchess were not confined to the probable issue of the trial. Samuel Foote, the comedian, took advantage of her situation to attempt to extort money from her. He wrote a farce, entitled 'A Trip to Calais,' in which he introduced her Grace under the sobriquet of Lady Kitty Crocodile, and stuffed the piece with particulars relative to the private history of the Duchess, which he had obtained from Miss Penrose, a young lady who had been about her person for many years. When the piece was finished, he contrived to have it communicated to her Grace that the Haymarket Theatre would open with the entertainment in which she was held up to ridicule and scorn. She was alarmed, and sent for Foote. He attended with the piece in his pocket. She desired him to read a part of it. He obeyed; and had not read far before she could no longer control herself, but, starting up in a rage, exclaimed, 'This is scandalous, Mr. Foote! Why, what a wretch you have made me!' After a few turns round the room, she composed herself to inquire on what terms he would suppress the play. Foote had the effrontery to demand two thousand pounds; but he, grasping at too much, lost all. She consulted the Duke of Newcastle, and the Lord Chamberlain was apprised of the circumstance, and his interference solicited. He sent for the manuscript copy of the 'Trip to Calais,' perused, and censured it. In the event of its publication she threatened to prosecute Foote for libel. Public opinion ranged itself on the side of the Duchess, and Dr. Schomberg only expressed its opinion when he said that 'Foote deserved to be run through the body for such an attempt. It was more ignoble than the conduct of a highwayman.'

On April 17, 1776, the trial of the Duchess came on in Westminster Hall, and lasted five days. The principal object argued was the admission, or not, of a sentence of the Spiritual Court, in a suit for jactitation of marriage, in an indictment for polygamy. As the judges decided against the admission of such a sentence in bar to evidence, the fact of the two marriages was most clearly

proved, and a conviction of course followed. The Duchess was tried by the Peers, a hundred and nineteen of whom sat and passed judgment upon her, all declaring 'Guilty, upon mine honour,' except the Duke of Newcastle, who pronounced 'Guilty, erroneously; but not intentionally, upon mine honour.'

No sooner did the Duchess see that her cause was lost than she determined to escape out of England. The penalty for bigamy was death, but she could escape this sentence by claiming the benefits of the statute 3 and 4 William and Mary, which left her in a condition to be burnt in the hand, or imprisoned; but she claimed the benefit of the peerage, and the Lord Chief Baron, having conferred with the rest of the judges, delivered their unanimous opinion that she ought 'to be immediately discharged.' However, her prosecutors prepared a writ 'ne exeat regno,' to obtain her arrest and the deprivation of her personal property. To escape this she fled to Dover, where her yacht was in waiting, and crossed to Calais, whilst amusing the public and her prosecutors by issuing invitations to a dinner at Kingston House, and causing her carriage to appear in the most fashionable quarters of the town. Mr. Meadows had carried his first point; she could no longer call herself Dowager Duchess of Kingston in England, but she was reinstated in her position of wife to Augustus John Hervey, and was therefore now Countess of Bristol. Mr. Meadows next proceeded to attack the will of the late Duke, but in this attempt he utterly failed. The will was confirmed, and Elizabeth, Countess of Bristol, was acknowledged as lawfully possessed of life interest in the property of the Duke so long as she remained unmarried. Mr. Meadows was completely ruined, and his sole gain was to keep the unhappy woman an exile from England.

Abroad the Countess was still received as Duchess of Kingston. She lived in considerable state, and visited Italy, Russia, and France. Her visit to St. Petersburg was splendid, and to ensure a favourable reception by the Empress Catharine she sent her a present of some of the valuable paintings by old masters from Kingston House. When in Russia she purchased an estate near the capital, to which she gave the name of Chudleigh, and which cost her 25,000*l*. The Empress also gave her a property on the Neva. She gave magnificent entertainments, at one of which, to which the Empress was invited, a hundred and forty of her own servants attended in the Kingston livery of black turned up with red and silver.

On her return from Russia she bought an estate at Mont-

martre, which cost her 9,000*l.*, and another that belonged to one of the French royal princes at Saint Assise, which cost her 55,000*l.* The château was so large that three hundred beds could be made up in it.

The account of her death shall be given in the words of the author of 'Authentic Details.'

'She was at dinner, when her servants received intelligence of a sentence respecting the house near Paris having been awarded against her. She flew into a violent passion, and, in the agitation of her mind and body, burst an internal blood-vessel. Even this she appeared to have surmounted, until a few days afterwards, on the morning of the 26th August (1788), when about to rise from her bed, a servant who had long been with her endeavoured at dissuasion. The Duchess addressed her thus: "I am not very well, but I *will* rise. At your peril disobey me; I will get up and walk about the room. Ring for the secretary to assist me." She was obeyed, dressed, and the secretary entered the chamber. The Duchess then walked about, complained of thirst, and said, "I could drink a glass of my fine Madeira and eat a slice of toasted bread; I shall be quite well afterwards; but let it be a large glass of wine." The attendant reluctantly brought and the Duchess drank the wine. She then said, "I knew the Madeira would do me good. My heart feels oddly; I will have another glass." She then walked a little about the room, and afterwards said, "I will lie on the couch." She sat on the couch, a female having hold of each hand. In this situation she soon appeared to have fallen into a profound sleep, until the women found her hands colder than ordinary; other domestics were rung for, and the Duchess was found to have expired, as the wearied labourer sinks into the arms of rest.'

Was it a touch of final malice or of real regret that caused the old lady, by codicil to her will dated May 10, 1787, to leave pearl earrings and necklace to the Marquise de la Touche? Was it a token that she forgave her the cruel book, 'Les aventures trop amoureuses; ou, Elisabeth Chudleigh,' which she wrote, or caused to be written, for the blackening of her rival, and the whitewashing of herself? Let us hope it was so. The proviso in the Duke's will saved her from herself; but for that she would have married an adventurer who called himself the Chevalier de Wortha, a man who obtained great influence over her, and finally died by his own hand.

A SOCIAL DIFFICULTY.

THE Bishop laid down the telegram on the table with the air of a man who has made his mind up, and will hear no further nonsense from anybody about it.

'No, my dear,' he said to his wife decisively. 'He's been acquitted, and that is so far satisfactory—to a certain extent, I grant you, satisfactory: humanly speaking, it was almost impossible that he could be acquitted. The evidence didn't suffice to convince the court-martial. I'm glad of it, very glad of it, of course, for poor Iris's sake; but upon my word, Charlotte, I can't imagine how on earth they can ever have found it in their consciences to acquit him. In my opinion—humanly speaking once more—it's morally certain that Captain Burbury himself embezzled every penny of all that money.'

Mrs. Brandreth turned the telegram over nervously, with two big tears standing ready to fall in the corners of her dear motherly old eyes, and then asked in a timid voice, 'So you've quite decided, have you, Arthur, that it must be all broken off between him and poor Iris?'

The Bishop played with his paper-knife, half stuck through the 'Guardian' in his testy fashion. 'My dear,' he answered, with the natural impatience of a just man unduly provoked by female persistence, 'how is it possible, I put it to you, that we could ever dream of letting her marry him? I don't wish to judge him harshly—far be it from me to judge any man: I hope I understand my duty as a Christian better: but still, Charlotte, it's one of our duties, you know,—an unpleasant duty, but none the less a duty on that account—not to shut our eyes against plain facts. We are entrusted with the safe-keeping of our daughter's happiness, and I say we oughtn't to allow her to imperil it by throwing herself away upon a man whom we strongly suspect—upon just grounds—to be quite unworthy of her. I'm sorry that we must give Iris so much pain; but our duty, Charlotte, our duty, I say, lies clear before us. The young man himself sees it. What more would you wish, I wonder?'

Mrs. Brandreth sighed quietly, and let the two tears roll unperceived down her placid, gentle, fair old face. 'The court-

martial has taken a more lenient view of the case, Arthur,' she suggested tentatively, after a pause of a few minutes.

The Bishop looked up from the table of contents of the 'Guardian' with a forcedly benign glance of Christian forbearance. Women *will* be women, of course, and *will* sympathise with daughters and so forth in all their foolish matrimonial entanglements. 'My dear,' he explained, with his practised episcopal smile of gentle condescension to the lower intelligence of women and of the inferior clergy, 'you must recollect that the court-martial had to judge of legal proof and legal certainty. Moral proof and moral certainty are, of course, quite another matter. I might hesitate, on the evidence given, to imprison this young man or even to deprive him of his commission in the army; and yet I might hesitate on the very same grounds to let him take my daughter in marriage. He has been acquitted, it is true, on the charge; but a suspicion, Charlotte, a certain vague shadow of formal suspicion must always, in future, hang over him like a cloud. Cæsar's wife—you remember the Roman dictator said, Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion. Surely, if even a heathen thought that, we, Charlotte, with all our privileges, ought to be very careful on what sort of man we bestow Iris.'

And having thus summarily dismissed the matter, the Bishop turned with profound interest to the discussion on the evil consequences of the Burials Bill and the spread of dissent in the West of England.

To a mind deeply engrossed with these abstruse and important subjects, the question about poor Iris's relations with Captain Burbury, of the Hundred and Fiftieth, was, of course, a relatively small one. Iris, indeed, had never been engaged to him; that was a great comfort in all this ugly, unpleasant business. The young man had only buzzed a little around the episcopal palace at Winchester, danced with her, talked to her, and arrived at a slight private understanding which didn't exactly amount to a regular engagement, and which had never been officially communicated to the parental ear. That, at least, was a great comfort; the Bishop considered it almost providential. Since this awkward question about the deficiency in the adjutant's accounts had first arisen, to be sure, the Bishop had learned from Mrs. Brandreth that this young man (he always spoke of Harry Burbury in that oblique fashion) had succeeded in making a passing impression upon poor Iris's unbestowed affections. But then—girls, you see,

are always fancying themselves in love with some young man or other, and are always profoundly convinced for the time being that they can never conceivably be happy without him. We, my dear Mr. Dean or my dear Sir William, who are men of the world—I mean, who are persons of maturer years and more solid understanding—we know very well that in six months or so girls forget all about that nice Mr. Blank or that dear Captain Somebody in their last passing fancy for young So-and-so, who will in due time be equally forgotten, in favour of some more really desirable and eligible person. And as in this case there would be no public withdrawal, no open breach of an announced engagement, Dr. Brandreth turned complacently to the discussion on the Burials Bill, and in ten minutes had completely dismissed from his profound episcopal mind the whole subject of Captain Burbury's unfortunate court-martial.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Brandreth, who was not philosophical, like the Bishop, but who felt herself most imprudently sympathetic with all dear Iris's little girlish feelings—quite wickedly so, she was almost afraid—Mrs. Brandreth, I say, had stolen away quietly to her daughter's room, and was sitting on the little couch at the foot of the bed, with Iris's hand held fast in hers, and Iris's soft crimson cheek laid tenderly on her motherly shoulder. 'There, there, darling,' she was saying with tears in her eyes, as she soothed her daughter's hand gently with her own; 'don't cry, Iris, don't cry, my pet. Yes, do cry; it'll do you good, darling. Perhaps by-and-by, when things blow over a little, your papa will think rather differently about it.'

Iris took up the telegram for the fiftieth time with a fresh flood of tears: 'From Captain Burbury, Aldershot, to Miss Brandreth, Eaton Place, London. The court-martial has acquitted me on all the charges. But I can never, never see you again.'

'Oh, mamma,' she cried through her sobs and tears, 'how cruel of him to say such a thing as that, and at such a moment!'

'No, no, dearest,' her mother said. 'He was quite right to say it. He feels the horrible suspicion rests upon him still, and he can't bear to face you while it's hanging over him. No good and true man could do otherwise. . . . But,' she added after a moment's pause, 'I think, Iris, . . . I think, darling, in spite of what he says, you'll probably see him here this very evening.'

Iris gave a sudden start of surprise and pleasure. 'This evening, mamma! This very evening?' she cried excitedly.

‘Oh no, not after sending me such a telegram as that, dear, surely!’

Mrs. Brandreth had not the slightest idea in the world that she was a practical psychologist—probably she could not have pronounced the word even if you had asked her—yet she answered quite readily, ‘Why, you know, Iris, he must have come straight out from the court-martial and sent off that telegram in the heat of the moment, just to let you know at once he had been at any rate acquitted. Of course he couldn’t help adding the despairing tag about his never, never seeing you. But when he goes back to his own quarters and thinks it over a little, he’ll make up his mind—I know young men, my dear—he’ll make up his mind that he must just run up to town and speak with you once more before he breaks it all off for ever. And if he sees you, Iris—but, after all, why *should* he break it off? He has nothing to be ashamed of. For, indeed, I’m quite sure, darling, he never, never, never, never could have taken that dreadful money.’

‘Of course not, mamma,’ Iris answered simply, with profound confidence. What a blessed thing it is to be a trustful woman! The Bishop’s moral certainty was really nothing at all compared to his pretty, weeping daughter’s unshaken conviction.

‘Charlotte,’ the Bishop said, putting his head in at the door for a second, with his episcopal hat suspended loosely in his right hand, ‘I’ve ordered the carriage, and I’m going down now to the Athenæum; from the Athenæum I shall drive on to the House of Lords; from the House of Lords, after dinner, I shall go into the Commons and hear what those dissenting Glamorgan people have got to say about this distressing Welsh disestablishment business. Very probably the debate may be late. I shall send the carriage home, in case you want it, and I shall cab it back or take the Metropolitan. Don’t sit up for me. Have you got a latch-key?’

Mrs. Brandreth gave an involuntary start. The notion of the Bishop demanding a latch-key was really and truly too ridiculous. The fact was, the Brandreths had only just taken their furnished house in Eaton Place for the season that very week, and the Bishop himself had arrived alone from the Palace, Whitechapel, that identical morning. A man oppressed by the spiritual burdens of an entire diocese cannot, of course, be reasonably expected to go house-hunting. It was irrational and unscriptural, Dr. Brandreth held, to suppose that he should leave the work of his see to serve tables. So Mrs. Brandreth and Iris had come to town and secured

the episcopal lodgings beforehand; and as soon as everything was put fully straight, the Bishop himself came up for the session to 'his own hired house' (like St. Paul) and entered into the enjoyment of a neatly ordered and well-arranged study. This, he explained, left his mind perfectly free for the wearing and harassing duties of the episcopate, combined, as they were under our existing circumstances, with the arduous work of a Lord Spiritual in the Upper House.

Yes, Mrs. Brandreth *had* a latch-key; and the Bishop, still absorbed in soul by the effects of the Burials Bill and the aggressive conduct of the Glamorganshire Dissenters, kissed his wife and daughter mechanically, and went off ruminating to the Athenæum. 'Iris has been crying,' he said to himself with a pensive smile, as John turned the handle of the carriage-door respectfully behind him. 'Girls will make a fuss about these foolish love affairs. But in a little while she's sure to get over it. Indeed, for my part, what she can possibly see to admire in this young man in the Hundred and Fiftieth rather than in poor dear good Canon Robinson, who would make such an admirable husband for her—though, to be sure, there *is* a certain disparity in age—fairly passes my comprehension.'

And yet, when young Mr. Brandreth of Christ Church had wooed and won Charlotte Vandeleur, he was himself a handsome young curate.

The afternoon wore away slowly in Eaton Place, but dinner-time came at last, and just as Mrs. Brandreth and Iris were rising up disconsolately from a pitiable pretence of dinner, 'for the sake of the servants,' there came a very military knock at the front door, which made poor Iris jump and start with a sudden flush of vivid colour on her pale cheek.

'I told you so, darling,' Mrs. Brandreth half whispered in a pleased undertone. 'It's Captain Burbury.'

And so it was. The mother's psychology (or instinct if you will) had told her correctly. Mrs. Brandreth rose to go into the drawing-room as soon as the card was duly laid before her. 'I oughtn't to leave them alone by themselves,' she thought to herself silently. 'If I did, under the circumstances, Arthur would be justifiably angry.' And, so thinking, she drew her daughter's arm in hers, murmured softly, 'Iris dear, I really feel I oughtn't to leave you,' and—walked off quietly without another word into her own boudoir.

Iris, her heart beating fast and high, opened the door and stepped alone into the front drawing-room.

As she entered, Harry Burbury, that penitent and shamefaced man, walked up to her with hands outstretched, . . . seemed for a moment as if he would bow merely, . . . then made as though he would shake hands with her . . . and finally, carried away for a moment from his set purpose, caught her up ardently in both his arms, kissed her face half a dozen times over, and pressed her tight against his heaving bosom.

He had never kissed her so before, but Iris somehow felt to herself that the action just then really required no apology.

Next minute, Harry Burbury stepped back again a few paces and surveyed her sadly, with his face burning a fiery crimson. 'Oh, Iris,' he cried, 'I mean Miss Brandreth—no, Iris. I made up my mind as I came along in the train from Aldershot that I should never, never again call you Iris.'

'But, Harry, you made up your mind, too, you would never see me!'

'I did, Iris, but I thought—I thought, when I came to think it over, that perhaps I had better come and tell you, before I left England, why I felt it must be all closed for ever between us.'

'Left England, Harry! All closed between us!'

'Yes, Iris; yes, darling!' And here Harry so far forgot his resolution once more that he again kissed her. 'I shall resign my commission and go away somewhere to the Colonies.'

'Harry!'

It was a cry of distress, and it rang terribly in the young man's ears; but with an effort he steeled himself. He didn't even kiss her. 'Iris,' he began once more, 'it isn't any use my trying to call you Miss Brandreth, and I won't do it. Iris, I feel that, after this, I have no right to come near you in future. I have no right to blight your life with that horrid, terrible, undeserved suspicion.'

'But, Harry, you are innocent! You didn't take it! And the court-martial acquitted you.'

'Yes, darling, they acquitted me of the charge, but not of the suspicion. If I *had* taken it, Iris—if a man had taken it, I mean, he might perhaps have kept his place, on the strength of the acquittal, and tried to live it down and brazen it out in spite of everything. But, as I didn't take it, and as I can't bear the shadow of that horrible suspicion, I won't live on any longer in England,

and I certainly won't burden you, dearest, with such a terrible, unspeakable shame.'

'Harry,' Iris cried, looking up at him suddenly, 'I know you didn't do it. I love you. I trust you. Why should we ever mind the other people?'

Harry faltered. 'But the Bishop?' he asked. 'How about your father, Iris? No, no, darling, I can never marry you while the shadow of this hideous, unworthy doubt rests over me still.'

Iris took his hand in hers with a gesture of tenderness which robbed the act of all suspicion of unwomanly forwardness. Then she began to speak to him in a low soft voice, to comfort him, to soothe him, to tell him that nobody would ever believe it about him, till Harry Burbury himself began half to fancy that his sensitive nature had exaggerated the evil. How long they sat there whispering together it would be hard to say: when lovers once take to whispering, the conversation may readily prolong itself for an indefinite period. So at least Mrs. Brandreth appeared to think, for at the end of a quiet hour or so her sense of propriety overcame her sympathy with Iris, and she went down to join the young couple in the front drawing-room. It gives me great pain to add, however, that she stood for a moment and rustled about a few magazines and papers on the landing-table, very prudently, before actually turning the handle of the drawing-room door. This is a precaution too frequently neglected in such cases by the matter-of-fact and the unwary, but one whose breach I have often known to produce considerable inconvenience to the persons concerned.

When Mrs. Brandreth at last entered, she found Iris, as girls are usually found on similar occasions, seated by herself bolt upright on a very stiff-backed chair at the far end of the room, while Harry Burbury was playing nervously with the end of his moustache on the opposite side of the centre ottoman. Such phenomenal distance spoke more eloquently to Mrs. Brandreth's psychological acumen than any degree of propinquity could possibly have done. 'They must have been very confidential with one another,' Mrs. Brandreth thought to herself wisely. 'I've no doubt they've settled the matter by themselves offhand, without even thinking the least in the world about dear Arthur.'

'Mamma,' Iris said timidly but quite simply, as her mother stood half hesitating beside her, 'Harry and I have been talking this matter over, and at first Harry wanted to leave England;

but I've been saying to him that somebody must have taken the money, and the best thing he can do is to stop here and try to find out who really took it. And he's going to do so. And, for the present,' Iris emphasized the words very markedly, 'we're not to be engaged at all to one another; but, by-and-by, when Harry has cleared his reputation——' and here Iris broke off suddenly, a becoming blush doing duty admirably for the principal verb in the unfinished sentence. (This figure of speech is known to grammarians as an aposiopesis. The name is for the most part unknown to young ladies, but the figure itself is largely employed by them with great effect in ordinary conversation.)

Mrs. Brandreth smiled a faint and placid smile. 'My dear Iris,' she said, 'what would your papa say if he only heard you talk like that?' And feeling now quite compromised as one of the wicked conspirators, the good lady sat down and heard it all out, the house thereupon immediately resolving itself into a committee of ways and means.

It was very late, indeed, when Mrs. Brandreth, looking at her watch, exclaimed in some surprise that she really wondered dear Arthur hadn't come home ages ago.

At this unexpected mention of the Bishop, Harry Burbury, who had run up to town honestly intending to see him and renounce his daughter, but had allowed himself to be diverted by circumstances into another channel, rose abruptly to take his departure. It occurred to him at once that two o'clock in the morning is not perhaps the best possible time at which to face a very irate and right reverend father. Besides, how on earth could he satisfactorily explain his presence in the Bishop's own hired house at that peculiarly unseasonable hour?

As for Mrs. Brandreth, now fairly embarked on that terrible downward path of the committed conspirator, she whispered to Iris, as William fastened the big front door behind Captain Burbury, 'Perhaps, dear, it might be quite as well not to mention just at present to your papa that Harry'—yes, she actually called him Harry!—'has been to see you here this evening. And if we were to go to bed at once, you know, and get our lights out quickly, before your papa comes home from the House, it might, perhaps, be all the better!'

To such depths of frightful duplicity does the downward path, once embarked in, rapidly conduct even an originally right-minded clerical lady!

Meanwhile the Bishop, sitting with several of his episcopal brethren in the Peers' gallery at the House of Commons, forgot all about the lapse of time in his burning indignation at the nefarious proposals of the honourable gentlemen from that revolutionary Glamorganshire. It was a field-night for the disestablishers and disendowers, and there seemed no chance, humanly speaking, that the debate would be terminated within any reasonable or moderate period. At last, about a quarter to two, the Bishop took his watch casually from his pocket. 'Bless my soul!' he cried in surprise to his right reverend companion, 'I must really be going. I hadn't the least idea the time had gone so fast. Mrs. Brandreth will positively be wondering what has become of me.'

There were several cabs outside the House, but it was a fair, clear, star-lit night, and the Bishop on the whole, being chilly with horror, preferred walking. It would stretch his episcopal legs a little, after such a long spell of sitting, to walk from Whitehall down to Eaton Place. So he walked on along the silent streets till he came to the corner of St. Peter's Church.

Then an awful thought suddenly flashed across his bewildered mind. Which house did he actually live in?

Yes, yes. It was too true. He had forgotten to notice or to ask the number!

If the Bishop had been a little more a man of the world, he would, no doubt, have walked off to the nearest hotel, or returned to the House and thrown himself upon the hospitality of the first met among his spiritual compeers. But he doubted whether it would be quite professional to knock up the night-porter of the Grosvenor at two in the morning, and demand a bed without luggage or introduction; while, as to his episcopal brethren, he would hardly like to ask them for shelter under such unpleasant and humiliating circumstances. The Bishop hesitated; and the bishop who hesitates is lost. Nothing but an unfaltering confidence in all his own opinions and actions can ever carry a bishop through the snares and pitfalls of modern life. He felt in his pocket for the unused latch-key. Yes, there it was, safe enough; but what door was it meant to open? The Bishop remembered nothing on earth about it. Mrs. Brandreth had met him at Paddington that morning with his own carriage, and he recollected distinctly that she had given John merely the usual laconic direction, 'Home!' When he came out that afternoon, absorbed

as he was by the proceedings of the Glamorganshire Dissenters, and distracted somewhat by side reflections about Iris's love affairs, he hadn't even had time to notice at which end of the street his own hired house happened to be situated. There was clearly only one way out of the difficulty: he must try all the doors, one after another, and see which one that particular latch-key was intended to open.

Walking up cautiously to the corner house, the Bishop tried to stick that unfortunate key boldly into the keyhole. It was too large. '*Non possumus*,' the Bishop murmured with a placid smile—it is professional to smile under trying circumstances—and with his slow and stately tread descended the steps to try the next one.

The next one succeeded a trifle better, it is true, but not completely. The keyhole was quite big enough, to be sure, but the wards stubbornly refused to yield to the gentle and dexterous episcopal pressure. In vain did the Bishop deftly return to the charge (just as if it were a visitation); in vain did he coax and twist and turn and wheedle; those stiff-necked wards obstructed his passage as rudely and stoutly as though they had been uncompromising Glamorganshire Dissenters. Baffled, but not disheartened, the Bishop turned tentatively to the third door. Oh, joy! The key fits! it moves! it withdraws the bolt readily from the clencher! The Bishop pushed the door gently. Disappointment once more! The door was evidently locked and fastened. 'This situation begins to grow ridiculous,' thought the Bishop. 'One can almost enter faintly, by proxy, into the personal feelings of our misguided brother, the enterprising burglar!'

On the Bishop went, trying door after door down the whole south side of Eaton Place, till he had almost reached the very end. It was certainly absurd, and, what was more, it was painfully monotonous. It made a man feel like a thief in the night. The Bishop couldn't help glancing furtively around him, and wondering what any of his diocesans would say if only they could see their right reverend superior in this humiliating and undignified position. His hand positively trembled as he tried the last door but five; and when it proved but one more failure to add to the long list of his misfortunes, he took a sidelong look to right and left, and seeing a light still burning feebly within the hall, he applied for a second his own keen episcopal eye with great reluctance to the big keyhole.

Next moment he felt a heavy hand clapped forcibly upon his right shoulder, and turning round he saw the burly figure of an elderly policeman, with inquisitive bull's-eye turned full upon him in the most orthodox fashion.

'Now then, my man,' the policeman said, glancing with scant regard at his hat and gaiters, 'you've got to come along with me, I take it. I've been watchin' you all the way down the street, and I know what you're up to. You're loiterin' about with intent to commit a felony, that's just about the size of what you're doin'.'

Dr. Brandreth drew himself up to his full height, and answered in his severest tone, 'My good fellow, you are quite mistaken. I am the Bishop of Winchester. I don't remember the exact number of my own door, and I've been trying the latch-key, on my return from the House of Lords, to see which keyhole it happened to open.'

The policeman smiled a professional smile of waggish incredulity. 'Bishop, indeed!' he echoed contemptuously. 'House of Lords! Exact number! Gammon and spinach! Very well got up, indeed, 'specially the leggin's. But it won't go down. It's been tried on afore. Bishops is played out, my man, I tell you. I 'spose, now, you've just been dinin' with the Prince of Wales, and havin' a little private conversation at Lambeth Palace with the Archbishop of Canterbury!' And the policeman winked the wink of a knowing one at his own pleasantries with immense satisfaction.

'Constable,' the Bishop said sternly, 'this levity is out of place. If you do not believe me to be what my dress proclaims me, then you should at least take me into custody as a suspicious person without insulting my character and dignity. Go down with me to the Houses of Parliament in a cab, and I will soon prove to you that you are quite mistaken.'

The policeman put his finger rudely to the side of his nose. 'Character and dignity,' he replied with unbecoming amusement—'character and dignity, indeed! Why, my good man, I know you well enough, don't you trouble yourself. My mates and me, we've been lookin' for you here this three months. Think I don't remember you? Oh, but I do, though. Why, you're the party as got into a private house in Pimlico last year, a-representing yourself to be a doctor, an' cribbed a gold watch and a 'ole lot of real silver from the unsuspectin' family. Come along with me,

Bishop, I'm a-goin' to take your reverence right off down to the station.'

The poor Bishop temporised and expostulated, but all to no purpose. He even ventured, sorely against his conscience, to try the effect of a silver key in unlocking the hard heart of the mistaken constable; but that virtuous officer with much spirit indignantly repudiated any such insidious assaults upon his professional incorruptibility. The Bishop inwardly groaned and followed him. 'How easily,' he thought to himself with a sigh, 'even the most innocent and respectable of men may fall unawares under a disgraceful suspicion.' For it is only in a limited and technical sense that Bishops regard themselves as miserable sinners.

Even as the thought flashed across his mind, he saw standing under a neighbouring doorway a person who was evidently endeavouring to escape notice, and in whom his quick eye immediately detected the bodily presence of Captain Burbury.

The Bishop drew a sigh of relief. This was clearly quite providential. Under any other circumstance he would, perhaps, have been curious to know how Captain Burbury came to be lingering so close beside his own hired house at that unseemly hour. He would have suspected an audacious attempt to communicate with Iris, contrary to the presumed wishes and desires of her affectionate parents. But, just as things then stood, the Bishop was inclined to hail with delight the presence of anybody whatsoever who could personally identify him. He was in a lenient mood as to unproved suspicions. To his horror, however, Captain Burbury, casting a rapid glance sideways at his episcopal costume, silhouetted out strikingly against the light from the policeman's bull's-eye, turned his back upon the pair with evident disinclination then and there to meet him, and began to walk rapidly away in the opposite direction.

There was no time to be lost. It was a moment for action. Captain Burbury must be made to recognise him. Half-breaking away from the burly policeman, who still, however, kept his solid hand firmly gripped around the episcopal forearm, the Bishop positively ran at the top of his speed towards the somewhat slinking and retreating captain, closely followed by the angry constable, who dragged him back with all his force, at the same time springing his rattle violently.

'Captain Burbury, Captain Burbury!' gasped the breathless Bishop, as he managed at last to come within earshot of the

retiring figure. 'Stop a minute, I beg of you. Please come here and explain to the constable.'

Captain Burbury turned slowly round and faced his two pursuers with obvious reluctance. For a second he seemed hardly to recognise the Bishop: then he bowed a little stiffly, and observed in a somewhat constrained voice, 'The Bishop. How singular! Good evening. I suppose . . . this officer . . . is showing you the way home to your new quarters.'

The policeman's sharp eye lost none of these small touches. 'Doesn't want to get lagged hisself,' he thought silently. 'Didn't half like the other fellow letting me see he was a pal of his after I'd copped him!'

'Captain Burbury,' the Bishop said, panting, 'I have most unfortunately forgotten the number of my new house. I was rather imprudently trying to open the doors all along the street with the latch-key which Mrs. Brandreth gave me on my leaving home for the House of Lords this morning, in order to see which lock it fitted, when this constable quite properly observed, and, I am sorry to say, misinterpreted my action. He believes I am loitering about to commit a felony. Have the goodness, please, to tell him who I am.'

'This is the Bishop of Whitechester,' Harry Burbury answered, very red, and with a growing sense of painful discomfort, expecting every moment that the Bishop would turn round upon him and ask how he came to be there.

'Ho, ho, ho!' the constable thought to himself merrily. 'Bishop and Captain! Captain and Bishop! That's a good one, that is! They're a gang, they are. Very well got up, too, the blooming pair of 'em. But they're a couple of strong 'uns, that's what I call 'em. I won't let on that I twig 'em for the present. Two able-bodied burglars at once on one's hands is no joke, even for the youngest and activest members of the force. I'll just wait till Q 94 answers my rattle. Meanwhile, as they says at the theayter, I will dissemble.'

And he dissembled for the moment with such admirable effect that the Bishop fairly thought the incident settled, and began to congratulate himself in his own mind on this truly providential nocturnal meeting with Captain Burbury.

'An' what's his Lordship's exact number?' the constable asked with a scarcely suppressed ironical emphasis on the title of honour.

'Two hundred and seventy,' Harry Burbury answered, trembling. 'Two hundred and seventy!' the guardian of the peace repeated slowly. 'Two hundred and seventy! So that's it, is it? Why, bless my soul, that's the very door that the military gent was a-lurkin' and a-skulkin' on! Perhaps you've got a latch-key about you somewhere for that one too, eh, Captain?'

Before the Bishop could indignantly repel this last shameful insinuation, Q 94, summoned hastily by his neighbour's rattle from the next beat, came running up in eager expectation.

'All right, Simson,' the Bishop's original captor exclaimed joyfully, now throwing off the mask and ceasing to dissemble. 'This is a good job, this lot. This here reverend gentleman's the Bishop of Whitechester, an' his Lordship's been a-loiterin' round in Eaton Place with intent to commit a felony. I ketched him at it a-tryin' the latch-keys. This other military gent's his friend the Captain, as can answer confidential for his perfect respectability. Ho, ho, ho! Security ain't good enough. The Captain was a-skulkin' and a-loungin' round the aireys hisself, an' didn't want at first to recognise his Lordship. But the Bishop, he very properly insisted on it. It's a gang this is; that's what it is; the Bishop's been wanted this three months to my certain knowledge as the medical gent what cribbed the silver. I'll take along his Lordship, Simson; you just ketch a hold of the Captain, will you?'

Harry Burbury saw at once that remonstrance and explanation would be quite ineffectual. He gave himself up quietly to go to the station; and the Bishop, fretting and fuming with speechless indignation, followed behind as fast as his gaitered legs would carry him.

Arrived at the station, the Bishop, to his great surprise, found his protestations of innocence and references to character disregarded with a lordly indifference which quite astounded him. He was treated with more obvious disrespect, in fact, than the merest curate in a country parish. He turned to Harry Burbury for sympathy. But Harry only smiled a soured smile, and observed bitterly, 'It is so easy to condemn anybody, you know, upon mere suspicion.'

The Bishop felt a twinge of conscience. It was somewhat increased when the inspector in charge quietly remarked, 'I feel a moral certainty that my officers are right; but still, in consideration of the dress you wear—a very clever disguise, certainly—I'll send one of them to make inquiries at the address you men-

tion. Meanwhile, Thompson, lock 'em up separately in the general lock-up. We're very full to-night, Bishop. I'm sorry we can't accommodate you with a private cell. It's irregular, I know, but we're terribly overcrowded. You'll have to go in along with a couple of other prisoners.'

Moral certainty! The Bishop started visibly at the phrase. It's hard to condemn a man unheard upon a moral certainty!

There was no help for it, so the Bishop allowed himself to be quietly thrust into a large cell already occupied by two other amiable-looking prisoners. One of them, to judge by the fashion in which he wore his hair, had very lately completed his term of residence in one of her Majesty's houses of detention; the other looked rather as though he were at present merely a candidate for the same distinction in the near future.

Both the men looked at the new-comer with deep interest; but as he withdrew at once into the far corner, and seated himself suspiciously upon the bed, without displaying any desire to engage in conversation, common politeness prevented them from remarking upon the singularity of his costume in such a position. So they went on with their own confabulation quite unconcernedly after a moment, taking no further notice in any way of their distinguished clerical companion.

'Then that's not the business you're lagged upon?' one of them said coolly to the other. 'It isn't the adjutant's accounts, you think? It's the other matter, is it?'

'Oh yes,' the second man answered quietly. 'If it had been the adjutant's accounts, you see, I'd have rounded, of course, on Billy the Growler. I never did like that fellow, the Growler, you know; an' I don't see why I should have my five years for it, when he's had the best part of the swag, look 'ee. I had no hand in it, confound it. It was all the Growler. I didn't even get nothink out of it. That ain't fair now, is it, I put it to you?'

'No, it ain't,' the first man answered, the close-cropped one. 'But there'll be some sort of inquiry about it now, in course, for—worse luck for the Growler—I heard this evenin' the court-martial's acquitted that there Captain Somebody. They'll look about soon for some one else, I take it, to put the blame upon.'

The other man laughed. 'Not that,' he put in carelessly. 'The court-martial's acquitted him, but nobody don't believe he didn't take it. Nobody ain't going to suspect the Growler.'

Every one says it's a moral certainty that that Captain Thingummy there he took the money.'

The Bishop drew a long breath. After all, this whole incident had been truly providential. No names were mentioned, to be sure; but from the circumstances of the case the Bishop felt convinced the person referred to was Harry Burbury. Could he have been placed in this truly ludicrous position for a wise reason—on purpose to help in extricating an innocent person from an undeserved calumny? The Bishop, with all his little failings, was at bottom a right-minded and tender-hearted man. He would not have grudged even that awkward hour of disagreeable detention in a common lock-up if he could be of any service, through his unjust incarceration, to one of his dear but wrongfully suspected brethren.

The men soon relapsed into silence, and threw themselves upon the bed and the bunk, which they assumed as by right, being the first comers. The Bishop, never speaking a word to either, but ruminating strangely in his own mind, took his own seat in silence on the solitary chair over in the corner.

The minutes wore away slowly, and the Bishop nodded now and then in a quiet doze, till the clock of the nearest church had struck four. Then, the door of the big cell was opened suddenly, and the inspector, with consternation and horror depicted legibly upon every fibre of his speaking countenance, entered the cell with a deferential bow.

'My Lord,' he cried in his politest tone to the delighted Bishop, 'your carriage is waiting at the door, and your coachman and footman have come here to identify you—a formality which I am sure will hardly be needful. I must apologise most sincerely for the very unfortunate——'

The Bishop held up his finger warningly. Both the other occupants of the cell were fast asleep. 'Don't wake them,' the Bishop whispered in an anxious tone. 'I naturally don't wish this story to get about.'

The inspector bowed again. Nothing could better have suited his wishes. His constables had made a foolish mistake, and the laugh would have been against them in the force itself, far more than against the right reverend gentleman. 'Who arrested the Bishop?' would soon have become the joke of the day among the street Arabs. Besides, had he not, under stress of circumstances, been committing the irregularity of putting as many as three prisoners in a single cell?

'As you wish, my Lord,' he answered submissively, and bowed the Bishop with profound respect into the outer room.

There John and the footman were waiting formally to recognise him, and the carriage stood ostentatiously at the door to carry him home again.

'Inspector,' the Bishop said quietly, 'you need not apologise further. But I don't want this most unfortunate affair to get publicly spoken about. You will easily perceive that it might be regarded by—ahem!—some irreverent persons in a ludicrous light. I shall be glad if you will request your constables to say nothing about it to one another or to anybody else.'

'My Lord,' the inspector said, with a feeling of the most profound relief, 'you may rely upon it that not a single soul except the parties concerned shall ever hear a word of the matter.'

'And my companion in misfortune?' the Bishop asked, smiling.

The inspector, in his fluster of anxiety about the great prelate, had clean forgotten poor Harry Burbury. He went off at once to release the young man and make him a further nicely graduated apology.

'Captain Burbury,' the Bishop said, 'can I drive you anywhere? Where are you stopping?'

Harry's face reddened a little. 'Nowhere, in fact,' he answered awkwardly. 'The truth is, I have only just run up from Aldershot, and had meant to put up at the Charing Cross Hotel.'

Companionship in misfortune *emollit mores*. The Bishop relaxed his features and smiled graciously. 'It's too late to go there now,' he said with unwonted kindness. 'You had better come round to Eaton Place with me, and Mrs. Brandreth will try to find a comfortable bed for you.'

Harry, hardly knowing what he did, followed the Bishop timidly out to the carriage.

As soon as they had seated themselves on the well-padded cushions of the comfortable episcopal brougham, the Bishop suddenly turned round and asked his companion, 'Captain Burbury, do you happen to know anybody anywhere who is called—excuse the nickname—the Growler?'

Captain Burbury started in surprise. 'The Growler!' he cried. 'Why, yes, certainly. He's the adjutant's orderly in my own regiment.'

The Bishop laid his hand kindly on the young man's arm. 'My dear Captain Burbury,' he said softly, 'I believe I can do you a slight service. I have found a clue to the man who really embezzled the regimental money.'

The carriage swam around before Harry Burbury's eyes, and he clutched the arm-rest by the window tightly with his hand. After all, then, the Bishop at any rate did not wholly suspect and mistrust him! Perhaps in the end he might marry Iris!

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'My dear,' the Bishop said to his wife, on the morning when the adjutant's orderly was first examined at Aldershot on the charge of embezzlement, 'this strongly enforces the casual remark I happened to make to you the other day about the difference between moral and legal certainty.'

'And as soon as this wretched man is really convicted,' Mrs. Brandreth observed timidly, 'there can be no reason why we shouldn't announce that Iris is engaged to Captain Burbury.'

When you have once rendered a man a signal service, you always retain a friendly feeling for him. The Bishop looked up benevolently from his paper. 'Well, Charlotte,' he said, 'he seems a very proper, well-conducted young man, and though I should certainly myself have preferred Canon Robinson, I don't see any good reason why he and Iris, if they like one another, shouldn't be married as soon as convenient to you.'

ON KIRK-GRIMS.

WHEN the writer of this article was a parson in Yorkshire, he had in his parish a blacksmith blessed or afflicted—which shall we say?—with seven daughters and not a son. Now the parish was a newly constituted one, and it had a temporary licensed service room; but in the week before the newly erected church was to be consecrated, the blacksmith's wife presented her husband with a boy—his first boy. Then the blacksmith came to the parson, and the following conversation ensued:—

Blacksmith: 'Please, sir, I've got a little lad at last, praised be, and I want to have him baptized on Sunday.'

Parson: 'Why, Joseph, put it off to Thursday, when the new church will be consecrated; then your little man will be the first child christened in the new font in the new church.'

Blacksmith (shuffling with his feet, hitching his shoulders, looking down): 'Please, sir, folks say that t' fust child as is baptized i' a new church is bound to dee (die). The old un (the devil) claims it. Naw, sir, I've seven little lasses, and but one lad. If this were a lass again, 'twouldn't 'a mattered; but as it's a lad—well, sir, I won't risk it.'

A curious instance this of a very widespread and very ancient superstition, the origin of which we shall arrive at presently.

In the first place, let us see the several forms it takes. All over the North of Europe the greatest aversion is felt to be the first to enter a new building, or go over a newly built bridge. If to do this is not thought everywhere and in all cases to entail death, it is considered supremely unlucky. Several German legends are connected with this superstition. The reader, if he has been to Aix-la-Chapelle, has doubtless had the rift in the great door pointed out to him, and has been told how it came there. The devil and the architect made a compact that the first should supply the plans and the second gain the *kudos*; and the devil's pay was to be the first who crossed the threshold when the church was built. When the building was nearly complete, the architect's conscience smote him, and he confessed the compact to the bishop. 'We'll *do* him,' said the prelate; that is to say, he said something to this effect in terms more appropriate to the century in which he lived, and to his high ecclesiastical office.

When the procession formed to enter the minster for the consecration, the devil lurked in ambush behind a pillar, and fixed his wicked eye on a fine fat and succulent little chorister as his destined prey. But alas for his hopes! this fat little boy had been given his instructions, and, as he neared the great door, loosed the chain of a wolf and sent it through. The evil one uttered a howl of rage, snatched up the wolf and rushed away, giving the door a kick, as he passed it, that split the solid oak.

The castle of Gleichberg, near Rönskild, was erected by the devil in one night. The Baron of Gleichberg was threatened by his foes, and he promised to give the devil his daughter if he erected the castle before cockcrow. The nurse overheard the compact, and, just as the castle was finished, set fire to a stack of corn. The cock, seeing the light, thought morning had come, and crowed before the last stone was added to the walls. The devil in a rage carried off the old baron—and served him right—instead of the maiden. We shall see presently how this story works into our subject.

At Frankfort may be seen, on the Sachsenhäuser Bridge, an iron rod with a gilt cock on the top. This is the reason: An architect undertook to build the bridge within a fixed time, but three days before that on which he had contracted to complete it the bridge was only half finished. In his distress he invoked the devil, who undertook to complete it if he might receive the first who crossed the bridge. The work was done by the appointed day, and then the architect drove a cock over the bridge. The devil, who had reckoned on getting a human being, was furious; he tore the poor cock in two, and flung it with such violence at the bridge that he knocked two holes in it, which to the present day cannot be closed, for if stones are put in by day they are torn out by night. In memorial of the event, the image of the cock was set up on the bridge.

Sometimes the owner of a house or barn calls in the devil, and forfeits his life or his soul by so doing, which falls to the devil when the building is complete.

And now, without further quotation of examples, what do they mean? They mean this—that in remote times a sacrifice of some sort was offered at the completion of a building; but not only at the completion—the foundations of a house, a castle, a bridge, a town, even a church, were laid in blood. In heathen times a sacrifice was offered to the god under whose protection the build-

ing was placed ; in Christian times the sacrifice continued, but was given another signification. It was said that no edifice would stand firmly unless the foundations were laid in blood. Usually some animal was placed under the corner-stone—a dog, a sow, a wolf, a black cock, a goat, sometimes the body of a malefactor who had been executed for his crimes.

Here is a ghastly story, given by Thiele in his 'Danish Folktales.' Many years ago, when the ramparts were being raised round Copenhagen, the wall always sank, so that it was not possible to get it to stand firm. They therefore took a little innocent girl, placed her in a chair by a table, and gave her playthings and sweetmeats. While she thus sat enjoying herself, twelve masons built an arch over her, which, when completed, they covered with earth to the sound of drums and trumpets. By this process the walls were made solid.

When, a few years ago, the Bridge Gate of the Bremen city walls was demolished, the skeleton of a child was found embedded in the foundations.

Heinrich Heine says on this subject: 'In the Middle Ages the opinion prevailed that when any building was to be erected something living must be killed, in the blood of which the foundation had to be laid, by which process the building would be secured from falling ; and in ballads and traditions the remembrance is still preserved how children and animals were slaughtered for the purpose of strengthening large buildings with their blood.'

The story of the walls of Copenhagen comes to us only as a tradition, but the horrible truth must be told that in all probability it is no invention of the fancy, but a fact. We have an allusion to this custom in the 'British History' of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who relates how Vortigern was building a castle, when the foundations sank. Then he consulted wise men, and they told him that he must lay a fatherless boy under them, and so only could they be made to stand.

Throughout Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and North Germany tradition associates some animal with every church, and it goes by the name of the Kirk-Grim. These are the goblin apparitions of the beasts that were buried under the foundation-stones of the churches. It is the same in Devonshire—the writer will not say at the present day, but certainly forty or fifty years ago. Indeed, when he was a boy he drew up a list of the Kirk-Grims that

haunted all the neighbouring parishes. To the church of the parish in which he lived belonged two white sows yoked together with a silver chain; to another a black dog; to a third a ghostly calf; to a fourth a white lamb.

Afzelius, in his collection of Swedish folk-tales, says: 'Heathen superstition did not fail to show itself in the construction of Christian churches. In laying the foundation, the people retained something of their former religion, and sacrificed to their old deities, whom they could not forget, some animal, which they buried alive, either under the foundation or without the wall. The spectre of this animal is said to wander about the churchyard by night, and is called the Kirk-Grim. 'A tradition has also been preserved that under the altar in the first Christian churches a lamb was usually buried, which imparted security and duration to the edifice. This is an emblem of the true Church Lamb—the Saviour, Who is the Corner stone of His Church. When any one enters a church at a time when there is no service, he may chance to see a little lamb spring across the quire and vanish. This is the church lamb. When it appears to a person in the churchyard, particularly to the grave-diggers, it is said to forebode the death of a child.'

Thiele, in his Danish folk-tales, says much the same of the churches in Denmark. He assures us that every church has a Kirk-Grim, who dwells either in the tower or in some other place of concealment; and he tells a queer story of a strand-spectre, or the ghost of a man drowned and washed ashore, wrestling with the church-grim. A peasant was walking by the sea-shore when one of these strand-spectres leaped on his back and screamed in his ear, 'Carry me to the church!' The man did so; and when he reached the graveyard, the strand-ghost left him and leaped over the cemetery wall, whereupon the Kirk-Grim flew at him, and an obstinate battle ensued between them. After having fought for awhile, they both desisted, and the strand-ghost said to the peasant, 'Did I stand up well?' The man replied, 'No.' The battle recommenced, and when the round was out the spectre of the shore asked, 'Did I stand up well this time?' 'Middling,' answered the peasant. The fight then recommenced, and the strand-ghost for the third time said, 'Now have I stood up well?' The peasant answered, 'Yes.' 'Ah!' said the spectre, 'it is well for thee that thou hast thus answered, for otherwise I would have broken thy neck.'

At Niverod, as a woman was going to milk her cows, she saw a corpse that had been washed up on the sand, and noticed that a large money-bag was about its waist. This she appropriated. Next night the strand-spectre came to her window and bade her follow. She obeyed, and, when she was outside her house, the ghost said, 'Take me by the leg, and draw me to the church.' But the nearest church lay three-quarters of a mile distant. When the church appeared in sight, the dead man said, 'Let go now; run lest the Kirk-Grim lay hold of thee.' She did accordingly; and scarcely had the corpse got over the wall, when the Kirk-Grim sallied forth after the woman and seized her by the petticoat, which, being old, gave way, and she slipped home in safety.

When Floris III., Count of Holland, returned from having homage done him at Walcheren, he sent the best workmen to Flanders to restore the dams or dykes which were in bad condition. One dam could not be stopped, as it crossed a quicksand, and the men were at their wits' end what to do. Then a Dutchman seized a dog by its tail and flung it into the quicksand, and hastily the workmen threw fagots over it and constructed their dam, which is called to this day after it Hontsdamm.

An inspector of dams on the Elbe, in 1813, in his 'Praxis,' relates that, as he was engaged on a peculiarly difficult dyke, an old peasant assured him it never would be made solid without he first sank a living child under its foundations.

In some cases the origin of the animal connection with the building is completely forgotten, and a new fable has been invented to explain it. For instance, over the church door at Georgenzell, in Franconia, is a great carved wolf's head; and the story goes that when the builders were engaged on the church a wolf defended them against all the wild beasts of the forest. In gratitude for this service they sculptured his head over the portal. But what is most probable is that they buried a live wolf under the foundation, and he, as Kirk-Grim, was their spectral defence. The Castle of Henneberg is said to take its name from a hen having laid an egg on one of the towers when it was completed, and before any one had taken up his habitation in it. Far more probably a hen had been laid alive under the foundation-stone to become the haunting tutelary spectre of the castle. The black dog of Peel Castle in the Isle of Man is well known, but not its origin. Almost certainly its bones lie beneath the foundations. Popular

superstition acknowledges the existence of the spectre dog, but forgets how he came there.

We still make much ado about laying foundation-stones, and bury beneath them bottles containing coins. This ceremony is the lingering on in a feeble, eviscerated form of the old sacrifice. Money is now substituted for a living animal, and the living animal was a substitute for a human victim.

Quite recently, the church of Holsworthy, in North Devon, has been restored and in part rebuilt. When the old south wall of the church was being pulled down, a cavity was discovered in the very centre of the wall, in which were human remains which crumbled to dust on exposure. There was no sign of its having been fashioned as a tomb, nor any external mark on the walls to indicate that a body was laid there. In fact, the body had distinctly been laid in the wall, embedded in the stones and mortar, and the wall built about and over it. Probably it was the body of some malefactor, who was hanged, and then deliberately enclosed in the wall to secure its stability for one thing, and likewise that its ghost might haunt the church and churchyard, as a spiritual policeman, warning off robbers and witches—to be, in a word, the Holsworthy church-grim. It must be remembered that in pre-Reformation times many valuables were kept in the church, a great deal of altar plate, and the money collections in boxes at shrines. In such churches as St. Albans, and Stone, in Kent, there remain to this day traces of the watch-lofts, where a guardian was always watching against sacrilege, against the plunder of the pilgrims' offerings. But a ghostly watcher was more economical than one who ate and drank, and he needed no relief; consequently most churches were thus furnished.

Probably fifty years ago the old people in Holsworthy knew and talked about the goblin that haunted the churchyard and church lane, but it might be hard to recover any such tradition in these days of board schools and general enlightenment.

Many a church has a story of a murder attached to it—the murder of an apprentice, may be, by his master, through jealousy because the apprentice carved a pillar, or wrought a corbel, or designed a window better than his master.

The following story is told of a church in England, though, unfortunately, the writer of this article cannot name it, as he did not preserve the name when he cut the story out of a local weekly paper. Three masons, who were engaged in building this church,

found on returning to their work each morning that the portion of the wall which they had completed the previous day had fallen during the night. The head mason informed his comrades one morning that he had dreamt that their labours would continue to come to naught unless they vowed that day to immure in the structure the first woman—wife or sister—who should arrive with the morning meal for one or other of them. They all took the oath; and the last mason had hardly been sworn before the head mason's own wife made her appearance, bringing her husband's breakfast. He kept the oath, and the woman's body disappeared in the mass of rapidly rising masonry. After that the wall remained solid as a rock.

Let the reader recall the tower built by Vortigern, and the advice given him to rear the wall over a fatherless boy. We have the same idea in both stories.

The white ladies who haunt so many old castles, and the 'radiant boys' who are the goblins attached to some of our old manor-houses, are almost certainly reminiscences of the victims buried under the foundations of these buildings.

Grimm, in his 'German Mythology,' says: 'It was often thought necessary to build living animals, even men, into the foundations on which an edifice was raised, to induce the earth to bear the burden laid on it. By this horrible custom men supposed that they ensured the stability of the structure and gained other advantages. According to Danish accounts, a lamb was buried under every altar, and a living horse was laid in every churchyard before a human corpse was placed in it. Both lamb and horse are to be seen occasionally in the church or graveyard, and betoken death. Under other houses pigs and hens were buried alive. A continuance of fine weather was secured by building a living cock into a wall, and cattle were prevented from straying by a living blind dog being walled in under the threshold of the stable. In times of cattle disease the Esthonians buried one of their cattle under the doorstep. In 1843, when a new bridge was built at Halle, the people insisted that it was necessary to wall in a living child into the pier to make the bridge secure. When the Castle of Liebenstein was erected, to ensure its solidity and safety from destruction a child was bought of its mother and built into the wall. The story goes that it was given a cake, and it cried out, "Mother, I see you." Later, as the wall rose, "Mother, I still see you;" and when the last stone was set,

"Mother, I see you no more." In the surrounding wall of the Castle of Reichenfels a living child was immured, and a stone standing a little forward indicates the spot. Spiel, in his "Archiv," relates a similar story. In later days an empty coffin was built into a wall as a symbol.' At Henneberg, in Saxony, one of the masons engaged on the walls sold his little son for the purpose. As the last stone shut the child in, it cried, 'Father, I am in the dark!' and then the mason fell off the ladder on which he stood and broke his neck. In Greece it is still believed that whoever first crosses a newly laid foundation will die within a twelve-month, to prevent which masons still kill a black cock or a lamb on the foundation-stone.

At Arta, or Narda, the ancient Ambracia, in the Turkish vilajet of Jannina, masons were erecting a bridge, which, however, they were unable to complete, as it continued to give way. Then, says the story, the voice of the Archangel Michael was heard from heaven, saying, 'Build in a human being, but not an orphan or a stranger; only the head mason's wife will do.' When the woman came to the works the mason pretended that he had dropped his ring, and asked his wife to find it. As she was stooping in the trench for the foundation, the masons fell on her and built her in. As she died she cursed the bridge, that it should shake under the feet of the passer over it.

An equally tragic story is that of the building of Scutari. The workmen were engaged on its fortifications for three years, but the walls would not stand. Then they protested that the only possible way to succeed was to lay under or in them a living human being. They accordingly laid hold of a young woman who brought them dinner, and immured her.

When Detinetz, on the Danube, was built by the Slaves, the chiefs of the people sent men out early in the morning to lay hold of the first boy they met. He was taken, and the foundation-stone laid on him. The town takes its name from him—Dijete being, in Slavonic, a boy.

An old German preacher, Berthold, certainly alludes to this prevailing superstition and long-continued custom in one of his sermons, when he says: 'Know, then, that when you have gotten children the devil sets to work to build a tower over you with these children.'

In all probability the story of Romulus slaying Remus when he leaped over the foundations of Rome has real reference to a

sacrifice to secure the stability of his city. Pomponius Mela speaks of the brothers of Philænus being buried alive in the trench of circumvallation of a new town.

In many cases the recollection that a death occurred when the church or castle was built lingers on; but its cause is forgotten, and a new legend has been invented to account for it. This is probably the origin of the stories of the murder of an apprentice by his master. An apprentice was killed and buried in the wall, not out of jealousy, but out of a notion of giving stability to the wall. Perhaps the Mohammedans have a similar notion, for when the walls of Algiers were built of blocks of concrete, in the sixteenth century, a Christian captive named Geronimo was placed in one of the blocks and the rampart built over and about him. Since the French occupation of Algiers a subsidence in the wall led to an examination of the blocks, and one was found to have given way. It was removed, and the cast of Geronimo was discovered in the block. The body had gone to dust, and the superincumbent weight had crushed in the stone sarcophagus. The block is now, we believe, preserved in the cathedral of Algiers.

In 1514 the spire of the cathedral church of Copenhagen was erected. A carpenter's assistant had an altercation with his master, as to which had the steadiest brain. Then the master ran a beam out from the top of the tower, took an axe in his hand, walked out on the beam, and struck the axe into the end of it. 'There,' said he to his man, on his return, 'go out and recover the axe.'

The assistant instantly obeyed. He walked out; but when he was stooping to take hold of the axe it seemed to him that it was double. Then he asked, 'Master, *which* of them?'

The master saw that he had lost his head, and it was all up with the man, so he said, 'God be with your soul!' At the same moment the man fell, and was dashed to pieces in the market-place at the foot of the tower.

It is possible that this may be the true version of the story; but it is more likely that the man was flung down by his master, with deliberate purpose, to secure by his death the stability of the spire he had erected.

It will be remembered that the architect of Cologne Cathedral, according to the legend, sold himself to the devil for the plan, and forfeited his life when the building was in progress. This really means that the man voluntarily gave himself up to death,

probably to be laid under the tower or at the foundation of the choir, to ensure the stability of the enormous superstructure, which he supposed could not be held up in any other way.

Much of the same class are the stories told of certain rivers—that they demand a life every year. Of the river Dart it is said:—

‘The river Dart, the river Dart,
Every year demands a heart’

—meaning that some one is annually drowned in it. But this idea dates back from heathen times, when an annual sacrifice was made to the river. In Norway, every torrent has got its ‘Strom-Grim,’ and every waterfall its ‘Fosse-Grim,’ which demand an annual victim. Grimm, in his ‘German Mythology,’ says: ‘Although Christianity forbade these sacrifices, and represented the old water-spirits as demons, yet the people retain a certain respect and regard for them, and have not by any means yet given up their old faith in them and their power.’ And he goes on to show how that the idea of their demanding human sacrifices is by no means a thing of the past. He says: ‘To this day, the people say when any one is drowned, “Ah, well! The river-spirit expects his annual victim, but prefers an innocent child.”’

Near Leipzig, the young people bathe, in summer, where the Elster falls into the Pleisse. The place is dangerous, because of the currents and deep pools among the sandbanks; and the saying goes that every year a human life is exacted by the united streams. Goethe alludes to the superstition in his ‘Wilhelm Meister.’ He says that it is commonly reported of the rivers, and lakes, and the sea, that they require the life of an innocent child every year; but, he adds, they do not retain the corpses—they throw them up after having sucked the lives out of them. Once a mother had her child drowned, and she prayed to God to give her back at least the body, that it might receive Christian burial. She went to the water’s edge, when a storm arose and washed the skull up at her feet. Next came the trunk; and she collected all the bones except that of one little finger. She folded them in her apron and carried them to the church. On reaching her destination, she was surprised to find her burden become heavy, when, on opening her apron, out scrambled the child alive, but wanting one little finger bone.

But we are making the acquaintance of water-grims and leaving church-grims, to whom, with an apology, we return.

In Yorkshire, the Kirk-Grim is usually a huge black dog with eyes like saucers, and is called a pad-foot. It generally frequents the church lanes; and he who sees it knows that he must die within the year. And now—to somewhat relieve this ghastly subject—we may tell an odd incident connected with it, to which the writer contributed something.

On a stormy night in November, he was out with a big umbrella over his head, that had a handle of white bone. A sudden gust—and the umbrella was whisked out of his hand, and carried away into the infinite darkness and mist of rain.

That same night a friend of his was walking down a very lonely church lane, between hedges and fields, without a house near. In the loneliest, most haunted portion of this lane, his feet and his pulsation and breath were suddenly arrested by the sight of a great black creature, occupying the middle of the way, shaking itself impatiently, moving forward, then bounding on one side, then running to the other. No saucer eyes, it is true, were visible, but it had a white nose that, to the horrified traveller, seemed lit with a supernatural phosphoric radiance. He would not, however, being a man of education and intelligence, admit to himself that he was confronted by the pad-foot; he argued with himself that what he saw was a huge Newfoundland dog. So he addressed it in broad Yorkshire: 'Sith'ere lass, don't be troublesome. There's a bonny dog, let me pass. I've no stick. I wi'nt hurt thee. Come, lass, come, let me by.'

At that moment a blast rushed along the lane. The black dog, monster, pad-foot made a leap upon the terrified man, who screamed with fear. He felt claws in him, and he grasped—an umbrella. Mine!

EGOTISM.

IN prison pent of Personality,
Full of the petty joys, the puny pains,
The trivial measure of life's meaner gains,
How then the outer radiance should I see
But through high slits that in my dungeon be?
For ever captive to these galling chains,
What can it profit that the young spring reigns,
Above, beyond, to one who is not free?
And by my side a sly, unsleeping elf
My gaoler is through long hours that we share,
Shifting upon my shoulders all his care,
Halving with me his little hoard of pelf—
Vainly I struggle to be unaware
Of this dull, daily torment of Myself!

JESS.

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD,

AUTHOR OF 'KING SOLOMON'S MINES,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SILAS IS CONVINCED.

At first Bessie was utterly prostrated by the blow that had fallen on her, but as time went on she revived a little, for hers was a sanguine nature with a great deal of elasticity about it. Troubles sink into the souls of some like water into a sponge, and weigh them down almost to the grave. From others they run off as the water would if poured upon marble, merely wetting the surface. She was neither the one nor the other of these, but rather of a substance between the two—a healthy, happy-hearted woman, full of beauty and vigour, made to bloom in the sunshine, not to languish in the shadow of some old grief. Women of her stamp do not die of broken hearts or condemn themselves to lifelong celibacy as a sacrifice to the shade of the departed. If No. 1 is unfortunately removed they, as a general rule, shed many a tear and suffer many a pang, and after a decent interval very sensibly turn their attention to No. 2.

Still it was a very pale-faced, quiet Bessie who went to and fro about the place after the visit of the one-eyed Kafir. All her irritability had left her now; she no longer jumped down her uncle's throat about his having despatched John to Pretoria. Indeed, on that very evening after the evil tidings came, he began to reproach himself bitterly in her presence for having sent her lover away, when she stopped him.

'It is God's will, uncle,' she said quietly. 'You only did what it was ordained that you should do.' And then she came and laid her sunny head upon the old man's shoulder and cried a little, and said that they two were all alone in the world now; and he comforted her in the best fashion that he could. It was a curious thing that they neither of them thought much of Jess when they talked thus about being alone. Jess was an enigma, a thing apart even from them. When she was there she was loved and allowed to go her own way, when she was not there she seemed to fade into outer darkness. A wall came down between her and

her belongings. Of course they were both very fond of her, but simple-natured people are apt to shrink involuntarily from what they cannot understand, and these two were no exception. For instance, Bessie's affection for her sister was a poor thing compared to the deep and self-sacrificing, though often secret, love that her sister showered upon her. She loved her old uncle far more dearly than she did Jess, and it must be owned that he returned the compliment with interest, and in those days of heavy trouble they drew nearer to each other even than before.

But as time went on they both began to hope again. No further news of John's death reached them. Was it not possible, after all, that the whole story was an invention? They knew that Frank Muller was not a man to hesitate at a lie if he had a purpose to gain, and they could guess in this case what the purpose was. His furious passion for Bessie was no secret from either of them, and it struck them as at least possible that the tale of John's death might have been invented to forward it. It was not probable, more especially as he was not present to urge his suit, but it was possible, and, however cruel suspense may be, it is at least less absolutely crushing than the dead weight of certainty.

One Sunday—it was just a week after the letter came—Bessie was sitting after dinner on the verandah, when her quick ears caught what she took to be the booming of heavy guns far away on the Drakensberg. She rose, and leaving the house climbed the hill behind it. On reaching the top she stood and looked at the great solemn stretch of mountains. Away, a little to her right, was a square precipitous peak called Majuba, which was generally clothed in clouds. To-day, however, there was no mist, and it seemed to her that it was from the direction of this peak that the faint rolling sounds came floating on the breeze. But she could see nothing; the mountain seemed as tenantless and devoid of life as the day when it first towered up upon the face of things created. Presently the sound died away, and she returned, thinking that she must have been deceived by the echoes of some distant thunderstorm.

Next day they learnt from the natives that what she had heard was the sound of the big guns covering the flight of the British troops down the precipitous sides of Majuba Mountain. After this old Silas Croft began to lose heart a little. The run of disaster was so unrelieved that even his robust faith in the invincibility of the English arms was shaken.

‘It is very strange, Bessie,’ he said, ‘very strange; but, never

mind, it is bound to come right at last. Our Government is not going to knock under because they have suffered a few reverses.'

Then came a long four weeks of uncertainty. The air was thick with rumours, most of them brought by natives, one or two by passing Boers, to which, however, Silas Croft declined to pay any attention. Soon it became abundantly clear, however, that an armistice was concluded between the English and the Boers, but what were its terms or its object they were quite unable to decide. Silas Croft thought that the Boers, overawed by the advance of an overwhelming force, meant to give in without further fighting; but Bessie shook her head.

One day—it was the same on which John and Jess had left Pretoria—a Kafir brought news that the armistice was at an end, that the English were advancing up to the Nek in thousands, and were going to force it on the morrow and relieve the garrisons—a piece of intelligence that brought some of the old light back to Bessie's eyes. As for her uncle, he was jubilant.

'The tide is going to turn at last, my love,' he said, 'and we shall have our innings. Well, it is time we should, after all the shame and loss and agony of mind we have gone through. Upon my word, for the last two months I have been ashamed to call myself an Englishman. However, there is an end of it now. I knew that they would never give in and desert us,' and the old man straightened his crooked back and slapped his chest, and looked as proud and gallant as though he were five-and-twenty instead of seventy.

The rest of that day^{*} passed without any further news, and so did the following two, but on the next, which was March 23, the storm broke.

About eleven o'clock in the forenoon Bessie was employed upon her household duties as usual, or rather she had just finished them. Her uncle had returned from making his after-breakfast round upon the farm, and was standing in the sitting-room, his broad felt hat in one hand and a red pocket-handkerchief in the other, with which he was polishing his bald head, while he chatted to Bessie through the open door.

'No news of the advance, Bessie dear?'

'No, uncle,' she replied with a sigh, and her blue eyes filling with tears, for she was thinking of one of whom there was also no news.

'Well, never mind. These things take a little time, especially

with our soldiers, who move so slowly. I dare say that there was some delay waiting for guns or ammunition or something. I expect that we shall hear something by to-night—'

He had got as far as this, when suddenly the figure of Jantjé appeared, flying up the passage in the extremity of terror and haste.

'De Booren, Baas, de Booren!' [The Boers, master, the Boers] he shouted. 'The Boers are coming with a waggon, twenty of them or more, with Frank Muller at their head on his black horse, and Hans Coetzee, and the wizard with one eye with him. I was hiding behind a tree at the end of the avenue, and I saw them coming over the rise. They are going to take the place,' and, without waiting to give any further explanations, he slipped through the house and hid himself up somewhere at the back out of the way, for Jantjé, like most Hottentots, was a sad coward.

The old man stopped rubbing his head and stared at Bessie, who was standing pale and trembling in the doorway. Just then he heard the patter of running feet on the drive outside, and looked out of the window. It was caused by the passing of some half-dozen Kafirs who were working on the place, and who, on catching sight of the Boers, had promptly thrown down their tools and were flying to the hills. Even as they passed a shot was fired somewhere from the direction of the avenue, and the last of the Kafirs, a lad of about twelve, suddenly threw up his hands and pitched forward on to his face, with a bullet between his shoulder-blades.

Bessie heard the shout of 'Good shot, good shot!' and the brutal laughter that greeted his fall, and the tramping of the horses as they came up the drive.

'Oh, uncle!' she said, 'what shall we do?'

The old man made no answer at the moment, but going to a rack upon the wall reached down a Westley-Richards falling-block rifle that hung there. Then he sat down in a wooden armchair that faced the French window opening on to the verandah, and beckoned to her to come to him.

'We will meet them so,' he said. 'They shall see that we are not afraid of them. Don't be frightened, dear, they will not dare to harm us; they will be afraid of the consequences of harming English people.'

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the cavalcade began to appear in front of the window, led, as Jantjé had said,

by Frank Muller on his black horse, accompanied by Hans Coetzee on the fat pony and the villanous-looking Hendrik, mounted on a nondescript sort of animal, and carrying a gun and an assegai in his hand. Behind these were a body of about fifteen or sixteen armed men, among whom Silas Croft recognised most of his neighbours, by whose side he had lived for years in peace and amity.

Opposite the house they stopped and began looking about. They could not see into the room at once, on account of the bright light outside and the shadow within.

'I fancy you will find the birds flown, nephew,' said the fat voice of Hans Coetzee. 'They have got warning of your little visit.'

'They cannot be far,' answered Muller. 'I have had them watched, and know that they have not left the place. Get down, Uncle, and look in the house, and you too, Hendrik.'

The Kafir obeyed with alacrity, tumbling out of his saddle with all the grace of a sack of coals, but the Boer hesitated.

'Uncle Silas is an angry man,' he ventured; 'he might shoot if he found me poking about his house.'

'Don't answer me!' thundered Muller; 'get down and do as I bid you!'

'Ah, what a devil of a man!' murmured the unfortunate Hans as he hurried to obey.

Meanwhile, Hendrik the one-eyed had jumped upon the verandah and was peering through the windows.

'Here they are, Baas; here they are!' he sang out; 'the old cock and the pullet, too!' and he gave a kick to the window, which, being unlatched, swung wide open, revealing the old man sitting there in his wooden armchair with Bessie standing at his side, his rifle on his knees, and holding his fair-haired niece by the hand. Frank Muller dismounted and came on to the verandah, and behind him crowded up a dozen or more of his followers.

'What is it that you want, Frank Muller, that you come to my house with all these armed men?' asked Silas Croft from his chair.

'I call upon you, Silas Croft, to surrender to take your trial as a land betrayer and a rebel against the Republic,' was the answer. 'I am sorry,' he added, with a bow towards Bessie, on whom his eyes had been fixed all the time, 'to be obliged to take you prisoner in the presence of a lady, but my duty gives me no choice.'

'I do not know what you mean,' said the old man. 'I am a subject of Queen Victoria and an Englishman. How, then, can I be a rebel against any republic? I am an Englishman, I say,' he went on with rising anger, speaking so high that his powerful voice rang till every Boer there could hear it, 'and I acknowledge the authority of no republics. This is my house, and I order you to leave it. I claim my rights as an Englishman——'

'Here,' interrupted Muller coldly, 'Englishmen have no rights, except such as we choose to allow to them.'

'Shoot him!' cried a voice.

'Treat him as Buskes treated Van der Linden at Potchefstroom!' cried another.

'Yes, make him swallow the same pill that we gave to Dr. Barber,' put in a third.

'Silas Croft, are you going to surrender?' asked Muller in the same cold voice.

'No!' thundered the old man in his English pride. 'I surrender to no rebels in arms against the Queen. I will shoot the first man who tries to lay a finger on me!' and he rose to his feet and lifted his rifle.

'Shall I shoot him, Baas?—shall I shoot him?' asked the one-eyed Hendrik, smacking his lips at the thought, and fiddling with the rusty lock of the old fowling-piece he carried.

Muller, by way of answer, struck him across the face with the back of his hand. 'Hans Coetzee,' he said, 'go and arrest that man.'

Poor Hans hesitated, as well he might. Nature had not endowed him with any great amount of natural courage, and the sight of his old neighbour's rifle-barrel made him feel positively sick. He hesitated, and began to stammer excuses.

'Are you going, Uncle, or must I denounce you to the General as a sympathiser with Englishmen?' asked Muller in malice, for he knew the old fellow's weaknesses and cowardice, and was playing on them.

'I am going. Of course I am going, nephew. Excuse me, a little faintness took me—the heat of the sun,' he babbled. 'Oh yes, I am going to seize the rebel. Perhaps one of those young men would not mind engaging his attention on the other side. He is an angry man—I know him of old—and an angry man with a gun, you know, dear cousin——'

'Are you going?' said his terrible master once more.

'Oh yes! yes, certainly yes. Dear Uncle Silas, pray put down that gun, it is so dangerous. Don't stand there looking like a wild ox, but come up to the yoke. You are old, Uncle Silas, and I don't want to have to hurt you. Come now, come, come,' and he held out his hand towards him as though he were a shy horse that he was endeavouring to beguile.

'Hans Coetzee, traitor and liar that you are,' said the old man, 'if you come a single step nearer, by God! I will put a bullet through you!'

'Go on, Hans; chuck a rim over his head; get him by the tail; knock him down with a yokeskei; turn the old bull on his back!' shouted the crowd of scoffers from the window, taking very good care, however, to clear off to the right and left in order to leave room for the expected bullet.

Hans positively burst into tears, and Muller, who was the only one who held his ground, caught him by the arm, and, putting out all his strength, swung him towards Silas Croft.

For reasons of his own, he was anxious that the latter should shoot one of them, and he chose Hans Coetzee, whom he disliked and despised, for the sacrifice.

Up went the rifle, and at that moment Bessie, who had been standing bewildered, made a dash at it, knowing that bloodshed could only make matters worse. As she did so it exploded, but not before she had shaken her uncle's arm, for, instead of killing Hans, as it undoubtedly would otherwise have done, the bullet only cut his ear and then passed out through the open window-place. In an instant the room was filled with smoke. Hans Coetzee clapped his hand to his head, and commenced to yell with pain and terror, and in the confusion that ensued three or four men, headed by the Kafir Hendrik, rushed into the room and sprang upon Silas Croft, who had retreated to the wall and was standing with his back against it, his rifle, which he had clubbed in both his hands, raised above his head.

When his assailants got close to him they hesitated, for, aged and bent as he was, the old man looked like mischief. He stood there like a lion, and swung the rifle-stock about. Presently one of the men struck at him and missed him, but before he could retreat Silas brought down the stock of the rifle on his head, and down he went like an ox beneath a poleaxe. Then they closed on him, but for a while he kept them off, knocking down another man in his efforts. As he did so the witch doctor Hendrik, who had

been watching for his opportunity, brought down the barrel of his old fowling-piece upon Silas's bald head and felled him. Fortunately the blow was not a very heavy one, or it would have caved his skull in. As it was, it only cut his head open and knocked him down. Thereon the whole mass of Boers, with the exception of Muller, who was standing watching, seeing that he was now defenceless, fell upon him, and would have kicked him to death had not Bessie precipitated herself upon him with a cry, and thrown her arms about him to protect him.

Then Frank Muller interfered, fearing lest she should be hurt. Plunging into the fray with a curse, he exercised his great strength, throwing the men this way and that like ninepins, and finally dragging Silas to his feet again.

'Come!' he shouted, 'take him out of this;' and accordingly, with taunts and curses and obloquy, the poor old man, whose fringe of white locks was red with blood, was kicked and dragged and pushed on to the verandah, then off it on to the drive, where he fell over the body of the murdered Kafir boy, and finally hauled up to the open space by the flagstaff, on which the Union Jack, that he had planted there some two months before, still waved bravely in the breeze. Here he sank down upon the grass, his back against the flagstaff, and asked faintly for some water. Bessie, who was weeping bitterly, and whose heart felt as though it were bursting with anguish and indignation, pushed her way through the men, and, running to the house, got some in a glass and brought it to him. One of the brutes tried to knock it out of her hand, but she avoided him and gave it to her uncle, who drank it greedily.

'Thank you, love, thank you,' he said; 'don't be frightened, I ain't much hurt. Ah! if only John had been here, and we had had an hour's notice, we would have held the place against them all.'

Meanwhile one of the Boers, getting on the shoulders of another, had succeeded in untying the cord on which the Union Jack was bent and hauling it down. Then they reversed it and hoisted it half-mast high, and began to cheer for the Republic.

'Perhaps Uncle Silas does not know that we are a republic again now,' said one of the men, a near neighbour of his own, in mockery.

'What do you mean by a republic?' asked the old man. 'The Transvaal is a British colony.'

There was a hoot of derision at this. 'The English Govern-

ment has surrendered,' said the same man. 'The country is given up, and the British are to evacuate it in six months.'

'It is a lie!' said Silas, springing to his feet, 'a cowardly lie! Whoever says that the English have given up the country to a few thousand blackguards like you, and deserted its subjects and the loyal and the natives, is a liar—a liar from hell!'

There was another howl of mockery at this outburst, and when it had subsided Frank Muller stepped forward.

'It is no lie, Silas Croft,' he said, 'and the cowards are not we Boers, who have beaten you again and again, but your soldiers, who have done nothing but run away, and your Government, that follows the example of your soldiers. Look here'—and he took a paper out of his pocket—'you know that signature, I suppose: it is that of one of the Triumvirate. Listen to what he says,' and he read aloud:—

"'WELL-BELOVED HEER MULLER,—This is to inform you that, by the strength of our arms fighting for the right and freedom, and also by the cowardice of the British Government, generals, and soldiers, we have by the will of the Almighty concluded this day a glorious peace with the enemy. The British Government surrenders nearly everything except in the name. The Republic is to be re-established, and the soldiers who are left will leave the land within six months. Make this known to every one, and forget not to thank God for our glorious victories.'"

The Boers shouted aloud, as well they might, and Bessie wrung her hands. As for the old man, he leant against the flagstaff, and his gory head sank upon his breast as though he were about to faint. Then suddenly he lifted it, and, with clenched and quivering fists held high in the air, broke out into such a torrent of blasphemy and cursing that even the Boers fell back for a moment, dismayed into silence by the force of the fury wrung from his utter humiliation.

It was an appalling sight to see this good and godfearing old man, his face bruised, his grey hairs dabbled with blood, and his clothes nearly rent from his body, stamp and reel to and fro, blaspheming his Maker, and the day that he was born; hurling execrations at his beloved country and the name of Englishman, and the Government that had deserted him, till at last nature gave out, and he fell in a fit, there, in the very shadow of his dishonoured flag.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BESSIE IS PUT TO THE QUESTION.

MEANWHILE another little tragedy was being enacted at the back of the house. After the one-eyed witch-doctor Hendrik had knocked Silas Croft down and assisted in the pleasing operation of dragging him to the flagstaff, it had occurred to his villanous heart that the present would be a good opportunity to profit personally by the confusion, and possibly to add to the Englishman's misfortunes by doing him some injury on his own account. Accordingly, just before Frank Muller began to read the despatch announcing the English surrender, he slipped away into the house, which was now totally deserted, to see what he could steal. Passing into the sitting-room, he annexed Bessie's gold watch and chain, which was lying on the mantelpiece, a present that her uncle had made her on the Christmas Day before the last. Having pocketed this he proceeded to the kitchen, where there was a goodly store of silver forks and spoons that Bessie had been engaged in cleaning that morning, lying on the dresser ready to be put away. These he also transferred, to the extent of several dozen, to the capacious pockets of the tattered military greatcoat that he wore. Whilst doing so he was much disturbed by the barking of the dog Stomp, the same animal that had mauled him so severely a few weeks before, and who was now, as it happened, tied up to his kennel—an old wine-barrel—just outside the kitchen door. Hendrik peeped out of the window, and, having ascertained that the dog was secured, proceeded, with a diabolical chuckle, to settle his account with the poor animal. He had left his gun behind on the grass, but he still held his assegai in his hand, and, going out of the kitchen door with it, he showed himself within a few feet of the kennel. The dog recognised him instantly, and went nearly mad with fury, making the most desperate efforts to break its chain and get at him. For some moments he stood exciting the animal by derisive gestures and pelting it with stones, till at last, fearing that the clamour would attract attention, he suddenly transfixed it with his spear, and then, thinking that he was quite unobserved, sat down and snuffed and enjoyed the luxury of watching the poor beast's last agonies.

But, as it happened, he was not quite alone, for, creeping along in the grass and rubbish that grew on the farther side of the wall,

his brown body squeezed tightly against the brown stones—so tightly that an unpractised eye would certainly have failed to observe it at a distance of a dozen paces—was the Hottentot Jantjé. Occasionally, too, he would lift his head above the level of the wall and observe the proceedings of the one-eyed man. Apparently he was undecided what to do, for he hesitated a little, and whilst he did so Hendrik killed the dog.

Now Jantjé had all a Hottentot's natural love for animals, which is, generally speaking, as marked as is the Kafir's callousness towards them, and he was particularly fond of the dog Stomp, which always went out walking with him on those rare occasions when he thought it safe or desirable to walk like an ordinary man instead of creeping from bush to bush like a panther, or wriggling through the grass like a snake. The sight of the animal's death, therefore, raised in his black breast a very keen desire for vengeance on the murderer, if vengeance could be safely accomplished; and he paused to reflect if this could be done. As he did so Hendrik got up, gave the dead dog a kick, withdrew his assegai from the carcass, and then, as though struck by a sudden desire to conceal the murder, undid the collar and, lifting the dog in his arms, carried him with difficulty into the house and laid him under the kitchen-table. This done, he came out again to the wall, which was built of loose unmortared stones, pulled one out without trouble, deposited the watch and the silver he had stolen in the cavity, and replaced the stone. Next, before Jantjé could guess what he meant to do, he proceeded to make it practically impossible for his robbery to be discovered, or at any rate very improbable, by lighting a match, and, having first glanced round to see that nobody was looking, reaching up and applying it to the thick thatch with which the house itself was roofed, and of which the fringe just here was not more than nine feet from the ground. No rain had fallen at Mooifontein for several days, and there had been a hot sun and dry wind, and as a result the thatch was as dry as tinder. The light caught in a second, and in two more a thin line of fire was running up the roof.

Hendrik paused, stepped a few paces back, resting his shoulders against the wall, immediately the other side of which was Jantjé, and proceeded to chuckle aloud and rub his hands as he admired the results of his handiwork. This was too much for the Hottentot on the farther side. The provocation was too great, and so was the opportunity. In his hand was the thick stick on which he

was so fond of cutting notches. Raising it in both hands, he brought the heavy knob down with all his strength upon the one-eyed villain's unprotected skull. It was a thick skull, but the knob prevailed against it and fractured it, and down went the estimable witch-doctor as though he were dead.

Next, taking a leaf out of his fallen enemy's book, Jantjé slipped over the wall, and, seizing the senseless man, dragged him by one arm into the kitchen and rolled him under the table to keep company with the dead dog. Then, filled with a fearful joy, he slipped out, shutting and locking the door behind him, and crept round to a point of vantage in a little plantation seventy or eighty yards to the right of the house, whence he could watch the conflagration that he knew must ensue, for the fire had taken instant and irremediable hold, and also see what the Boers were doing.

Ten minutes or so afterwards that amiable character Hendrik partially regained his senses, to find himself surrounded by a sea of fire, in which he perished miserably, not having power to move, and his feeble cries being totally swallowed up and lost in the fierce roaring of the flames, even had there been anybody there to hear them. And that was the very appropriate end of Hendrik and the magic of Hendrik.

Down by the flagstaff the old man lay in his fit, with Bessie tending him and a posse of Boers standing round, smoking and laughing or lounging about with an air of lordly superiority, well worthy of victors in possession.

'Will none of you help me to take him to the house?' she cried. 'Surely you have ill-treated an old man enough.'

Nobody stirred, not even Frank Muller, who was gazing at her tear-stained face with a fierce smile playing round the corners of his clean-cut mouth, which his beard was trimmed to leave clear.

'It will pass, Miss Bessie,' he said; 'it will pass. I have often seen such fits. They come from too much excitement, or too much drink——'

Suddenly he broke off with an exclamation, and pointed to the house, from the roof of which pale curls of blue smoke were rising.

'Who has fired the house?' he shouted. 'By Heaven! I will shoot the man.'

The Boers started round and stared in astonishment, and as they did so the tinderlike roof burst into a broad sheet of flame,

that grew and gathered breadth and height with an almost marvellous rapidity. Just then, too, a light breeze sprang up from over the hill at the rear of the house, as it sometimes did at this time of the day, and bent the flames over towards them in an immense arch of fire, so that the fumes and heat and smoke began to beat upon their faces.

'Oh, the house is burning down!' cried Bessie, utterly bewildered by this new misfortune.

'Here, you!' shouted Muller to the gaping Boers, 'go and see if anything can be saved. Phew! we must get out of this,' and stooping down he picked up Silas Croft in his arms and walked off with him, followed by Bessie, towards the plantation on their left, which was the same where Jantjé had taken refuge. In the centre of this plantation was a little glade surrounded by young orange and blue-gum trees. Here he put the old man down upon a bed of dead leaves and soft springing grass, and then hurried away, without a word, to the fire, only to find that the house was already utterly unapproachable. In fifteen minutes, such was the rapidity with which the flames did their work upon the mass of dry straw and the wooden roof and floorings beneath, the whole of the interior of the house was a glowing incandescent pile, and in half an hour it was completely gutted, nothing being left standing but the massive outer walls of stone, over which a dense column of smoke hung like a pall. Mooifontein was a blackened ruin; only the stables and outhouses, which were roofed with galvanised iron, being left uninjured.

Frank Muller had not been gone five minutes when, to Bessie's joy, her uncle opened his eyes and sat up.

'What is it? what is it?' he said. 'Ah! I recollect. What is all this smell of fire? Surely they have not burnt the place?'

'Yes, uncle,' sobbed Bessie, 'they have.'

The old man groaned. 'It took me ten years to build, bit by bit, almost stone by stone, and now they have destroyed it. Well, why not? God's will be done! Give me your arm, love, I want to get to the water. I feel faint and sick.'

She did as he bade her, sobbing bitterly. Within fifteen yards, on the edge of the plantation, was a little spruit or runnel of water, and of this he drank copiously and bathed his wounded head and face.

'There, love,' he said, 'don't fret, I feel quite myself again. I fear I made a fool of myself. I haven't learnt to bear misfortune

and dishonour as I should yet, and, like Job, I felt as though God had forsaken us. But, as I said, His will be done. What is the next move, I wonder? Ah! we shall soon know, for here comes our friend Frank Muller.'

'I am glad to see that you have recovered, Uncle,' said Muller politely, 'and I am sorry to have to tell you that the house is beyond help. Believe me, if I knew who fired it I would shoot him. It was not my wish or intention that the property should be destroyed.'

The old man merely bowed his head and made no answer. His fiery spirit seemed to be crushed out of him.

'What is it your pleasure that we should do, sir?' said Bessie at last. 'Perhaps, now that we are ruined, you will allow us to go to Natal, which, I suppose, is still an English country?'

'Yes, Miss Bessie, Natal is still English—for the present; soon it will be Dutch; but I am sorry that I cannot let you go there now. My orders are to keep you both prisoners and to try your uncle by court-martial. The waggon-house,' he went on quickly, 'with the two little rooms on each side of it, has not been touched by the fire. I will have them made ready for you, and as soon as the heat is less you can go there;' and turning to the men who had followed him he gave some rapid orders, which two of them departed to carry out.

Still the old man made no comment, he did not even seem indignant or surprised, but poor Bessie was utterly prostrated and stood helpless, not knowing what to say to this terrible, remorseless man, who stood so calm and unmoved there before them.

Frank Muller paused awhile to think, stroking his beard as he did so, then turned again and addressed the two remaining men behind him.

'You will keep guard over the prisoner,' indicating Silas Croft, 'and suffer none to communicate with him by word or sign. As soon as it is ready you will place him in the little room to the left of the waggon-house; and see that he is supplied with all he wants. If he escapes or converses, or is ill-treated, I will hold you responsible. Do you understand?'

'Yah, Meinheer,' was the answer.

'Very good; be careful you do not forget. And now, Miss Bessie, I shall be glad if you can give me a word alone——'

'No,' said Bessie; 'no, I will not leave my uncle.'

'I fear you will have to do that,' he said, with his cold smile.

'I beg you to think again. It will be very much to your advantage to speak to me, and to your uncle's advantage also. I should advise you to come.'

Bessie hesitated. She hated and mistrusted the man, as she had good reason to do, and feared to trust herself alone with him.

Whilst she still hesitated, the two Boers, under whose watch and ward Muller had placed her uncle, came and stood between him and her, cutting her off from him. Muller turned and walked a few paces—ten or so—to the right, and in desperation she followed him. He halted behind a bushy orange-tree of some eight years' growth. Overtaking him, she stood silent, waiting for him to begin. They were quite close to the others, but the roaring of the flames of the burning house was still sufficiently loud to have drowned a much more audible conversation than theirs.

'What is it you have to say to me?' she said at length, pressing her hand against her heart to still its beating. Her woman's instinct told her what was coming, and she was trying to nerve herself to meet it.

'Miss Bessie,' he said slowly, 'it is this. For years I have loved you and wanted to marry you. I again ask you to be my wife.'

'Mr. Frank Muller,' she answered, her spirit rising to the occasion, 'I thank you for your offer, and the only answer that I can give you is that I once and for all decline it.'

'Think,' he said; 'I love you as women are not often loved. You are always in my mind, by day and by night too. Everything I do, every step I go up the ladder, I have said and say to myself, "I am doing it for Bessie Croft, whom I mean to marry." Things have changed in this country. The rebellion has been successful. It was I who gave the casting vote for it that I might win you. I am now a great man, and shall one day be a greater. You will be great with me. Think what you say.'

'I have thought, and I will not marry you. You dare to come and ask me to marry you over the ashes of my home, out of which you have dragged me and my poor old uncle! I hate you, I tell you, and I will not marry you! I had rather marry a Kafir than marry you, Frank Muller, however great you may be.'

He smiled. 'Is it because of the Englishman Niel that you will not marry me? He is dead. It is useless to cling to a dead man.'

'Dead or alive, I love him with all my heart, and if he is dead

it is at the hands of your people, and his blood rises up between us.'

'His blood has sunk down into the sand. He is dead, and I am glad that he is dead. Once more, is that your last word?'

'It is.'

'Very good. Then I tell you that you shall marry me or—

'Or what?'

'Or your uncle, the old man you love so much, shall die!'

'What do you mean?' she said in a choked voice.

'What I say; no more and no less. Do you think that I will let one old man's life stand between me and my desire? Never. If you will not marry me, Silas Croft shall be put upon his trial for attempted murder and for treason within an hour from this. Within an hour and a half he shall be condemned to die, and to-morrow at dawn he shall die, by warrant under my hand. I am commandant here, with power of life and death, and I tell you that he shall certainly die—and his blood will be on your head.'

Bessie grasped at the tree for support. 'You dare not,' she said; 'you dare not murder an innocent old man.'

'Dare not!' he answered; 'you must understand me very ill, Bessie Croft, when you talk of what I dare not do for you. There is nothing,' he added, with a thrill of his rich voice, 'that I dare not do to gain you. Listen; promise to marry me to-morrow morning. I will get a clergyman here from Wakkerstroom, and your uncle shall go free as air, though he is a traitor to the land, and though he has tried to shoot a burgher after the declaration of peace. Refuse, and he dies. Choose now.'

'I have chosen,' she answered with passion. 'Frank Muller, perjured traitor—yes, murderer that you are, I will *not* marry you!'

'Very good, very good, Bessie; as you will. But now one more thing. You shall not say that I have not warned you. If you persist in this your uncle shall die, but you shall not escape me. You will not marry me? Well, even in this country, where I can do most things, I cannot force you to do that. But I can force you to be my wife in all but the name, without marriage; and this, when your uncle is stiff in his bloody grave, I will do. You shall have one more chance after the trial, and one only. If you refuse he shall die, and then, after his death, I shall take you away by force, and in a week's time you will be glad enough to marry me to cover up your shame, my pretty!'

'You are a devil, Frank Muller, a wicked devil, but I will not

be frightened into dishonour by you. I had rather kill myself. I trust to God to help me. I will have nothing to do with you ;' and she put her hands before her face and burst into tears.

'You look lovely when you weep,' he said with a laugh ; 'to-morrow I shall be able to kiss away your tears. As you will. Here, you!' he shouted to some men, who could be seen watching the progress of the dying fire, 'come here.'

Some of the men obeyed, and he proceeded to give instructions in the same terms that he had given to the other two men who were watching old Silas, ordering Bessie to be instantly incarcerated in the corresponding little room on the other side of the waggon-house, and kept strictly from all communication from the outside world, adding, however, these words :—

'Bid the burghers assemble in the waggon-house for the trial of the Englishman, Silas Croft, for treason against the State and attempted murder of one of the burghers of the State in the execution of the commands of the Triumvirate.'

The two men advanced and seized Bessie by both arms. Then, faint and overpowered, she was led through the little plantation, over a gap in the garden wall, down past the scorched syringa-trees that lined the roadway that ran along the hillside at the back of the still burning house, till they reached the waggon-house with the two little rooms which served respectively as a store and harness room. She was then thrust into the store-room, which was half full of loose potatoes and mealies in sacks, and the door locked upon her.

There was no window to this room, and the only light in it was such as found its way through the chinks of the door and an air-hole in the masonry of the back wall. She sank on a half-emptied sack of mealies and tried to reflect. Her first idea was of escape, but she soon realised that that was a practical impossibility. The stout yellow wood door was locked upon her, and a sentry stood before it. She rose and looked through the air-hole in the rear wall, but there another sentry was posted. Then she turned her attention to the side wall that divided the room from the waggon-house. It was built of fourteen-inch green brickwork, and had cracked from the shrinkage of the bricks, so that she could hear anything that went on in the waggon-house, and even see anybody who might be moving about in it. But it was far too strong for her to hope to be able to break through, and even if she did it would be useless, for there were armed men there also. Besides, how could she run away and leave her old uncle to his fate?

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

HALF an hour passed in silence, which was only broken by the footsteps of the sentries as they trapped, or rather loitered, up and down, or by the occasional fall of some calcined masonry from the walls of the burnt-out house. What between the smell of smoke and dust, the heat of the sun on the tin roof above, and of the red-hot embers of the house in front, the little room where Bessie was shut up was almost unbearable, and she felt as though she should faint there upon the sacks. Through one of the cracks in the waggon-house wall there blew a little draught, and by this crack Bessie placed herself, leaning her head against the wall so as to get the full benefit of the air and command a view of the place. Presently several of the Boers came into the waggon-house and proceeded to pull some of the carts and timber out of it, leaving one buck-waggon, however, placed along the wall on the side opposite to the crack through which she was looking. Then they pulled the Scotch cart over to her side, laughing about something among themselves as they did so, and arranged it with its back turned towards the waggon, supporting the shafts upon a waggon-jack. Next, out of the farther corner of the place, they extracted an old saw-bench and set it at the top of the open space. Then Bessie understood what they were doing: they were arranging a court, and the saw-bench was the judge's chair. So Frank Muller meant to carry out his threat!

Shortly after this all the Boers, except those who were keeping guard, filed into the place and began to clamber on to the buck-waggon, seating themselves with much rough joking in a double row upon the broad side rails. Next appeared Hans Coetzee, his head bound up in a bloody handkerchief. He was pale and shaky, but Bessie could see that he was but little the worse for his wound. Then came Frank Muller himself, looking white and very terrible, and as he came the men stopped their joking and talking. Indeed it was curious to observe how strong was his ascendancy over them. As a rule, the weak part of Boer organisation is that it is practically impossible to get one Boer to pay deference to or obey another; but this was certainly not the case where Frank Muller was concerned.

Muller advanced without hesitation to the saw-bench at the top of the open space, and sat down on it, placing his rifle between his knees. After this there was a pause, and next minute Bessie saw her old uncle conducted in by two armed Boers, who halted in the middle of the space, about three paces from the saw-bench, and stood one on either side of their prisoner. At the same time Hans Coetzee climbed up into the Scotch cart, and Muller drew a notebook and a pencil from his pocket.

'Silence!' he said. 'We are assembled here to try the Englishman, Silas Croft, by court-martial. The charges against him are that by word and deed, notably by continuing to fly the English flag after the country had been surrendered to the Republic, he has traitorously rebelled against the government of the country. Further, that he has attempted to murder a burgher of the Republic by shooting at him with a loaded rifle. If these charges are proved against him he will be liable to death, by martial law. Prisoner Croft, what do you answer to the charges against you?'

The old man, who seemed very quiet and composed, looked up at his judge and then replied:—

'I am an English subject. I only defended my house after you had murdered one of my servants. I deny your jurisdiction over me, and I refuse to plead.'

Frank Muller made some notes in his pocket-book, and then said, 'I overrule the prisoner's objection as to the jurisdiction of the court. As to the charges, we will now take evidence. Of the first charge no evidence is needed; for we all saw the flag flying. As to the second, Hans Coetzee, the assaulted burgher, will now give evidence. Hans Coetzee, do you swear in the name of God and the Republic to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?'

'Almighty, yes,' answered Hans from the cart on which he had enthroned himself, 'so help me, the dear Lord.'

'Proceed then.'

'I was entering the house of the prisoner to arrest him, in obedience to your worshipful commands, when the prisoner lifted a gun and fired at me. The bullet from the gun struck me upon the ear, cutting it and putting me to much pain and loss of blood. That is the evidence I have to give.'

'That's right; that is not a lie,' said some of the men on the waggon.

'Prisoner, have you any question to ask the witness?' said Muller.

'I have no question to ask; I deny your jurisdiction,' said the old man with spirit.

'The prisoner declines to question the witness, and again pleads to the jurisdiction a plea which I have overruled. Gentlemen, do you desire to hear any further evidence?'

'No, no.'

'Do you then find the prisoner guilty of the charges laid against him?'

'Yes, yes,' from the waggon.

Muller made a further note in his book, and then went on:—

'Then the prisoner, having been found guilty of high treason and attempted murder, the only matter that remains is the question of the punishment required to be meted out by the law to such wicked and horrible offences. Every man will give his verdict, having duly considered if there is any way by which, in accordance with the holy dictates of his conscience, and with the natural promptings to pity in his heart, he can extend mercy to the prisoner. As commandant and president of the court, the first vote lies with me; and I must tell you, gentlemen, that I feel the responsibility a very heavy one in the sight of God and my country; and I must also warn you not to be influenced or overruled by my decision, who am, like you, only a man, liable to err and be led away.'

'Hear, hear,' said the voices on the waggon, as he paused to note the effect of his address.

'Gentlemen and burghers of the State, my natural promptings in this case are towards pity. The prisoner is an old man, who has lived many years amongst us like a brother. Indeed he is a "voortrekker," and, though an Englishman, one of the fathers of the land. Can we condemn such a one to a bloody grave, more especially as he has a niece dependent upon him?'

'No, no!' they cried, in answer to this skilful touch upon the better strings in their nature.

'Gentlemen, those sentiments do you honour. My own heart cried but now "No, no. Whatever his sins have been, let the old man go free." But then came reflection. True, the prisoner is old; but should not age have taught him wisdom? Is that which is not to be forgiven to youth to be forgiven to the ripe experience of many years? May a man murder and be a traitor because he is old?'

'No, certainly not!' cried the chorus on the waggon.

'Then there is the second point. He was a "voortrekker" and a father of the land. Should he not therefore have known better than to betray it into the hands of the cruel, godless English? For, gentlemen, though that charge is not laid against him, we must remember, as throwing a light upon his general character, that the prisoner was one of those vile men who betrayed the land to Shepstone. Is it not a most cruel and unnatural thing that a father should sell his own child into slavery?—that a father of the land should barter away its freedom? Therefore on this point, too, does justice temper mercy.'

'That is so,' said the chorus with particular enthusiasm, most of them having themselves been instrumental in bringing the annexation about.

'Then one more thing: this man has a niece, and it is the care of all good men to see that the young should not be left destitute and friendless, lest they should grow up bad and become enemies to the wellbeing of the State. But in this case that will not be so, for the farm will go to the girl by law; and, indeed, she will be well rid of so desperate and godless an old man.

'And now, having set my reasons towards one side and the other before you, and having warned you fully to act each man according to his conscience, I give my vote. It is'—and in the midst of the most intense silence he paused and looked at old Silas, who never even quailed—'it is *death*.'

There was a little hum of conversation, and poor Bessie, surveying the scene through the crack in the store-room wall, groaned in bitterness and despair of heart.

Then Hans Coetzee spoke. 'It cut his bosom in two,' he said, 'to have to say a word against one to whom he had for many years been as a brother. But, then, what was he to do? The man had plotted evil against their land, the dear land that the dear Lord had given them, and which they and their fathers had on various occasions watered, and were still continuing to water, with their blood. What could be a fitting punishment for so black-hearted a traitor, and how would it be possible to ensure the better behaviour of other damned Englishmen, unless they inflicted that punishment? There could, alas! be but one answer—though, personally speaking, he uttered it with many tears—and that answer was *death*.'

After this there were no more speeches, but each man voted

according to his age, upon his name being called by the president. At first there was a little hesitation, for some among them were fond of old Silas, and loth to destroy him. But Frank Muller had played his game very well, and, notwithstanding his appeals to their independence of judgment, they knew full surely what would happen to him who gave his vote against the president. So they swallowed their better feelings with all the ease for which such swallowing is noted, and one by one uttered the fatal word.

When they had all done Frank Muller addressed Silas :—

‘Prisoner, you have heard the judgment against you. I need not now recapitulate your crimes. You have had a fair and open trial by court-martial, such as our law directs. Have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you in accordance with the judgment?’

Old Silas looked up with flashing eyes, and shook back his fringe of white hair like a lion at bay.

‘I have nothing to say. If you will do murder, do it, black-hearted villain that you are! I might point to my grey hairs, to my murdered servant, to my home that took me ten years to build, destroyed by you! I might tell you how I have been a good citizen and lived peaceably and neighbourly in the land for more than twenty years—ay, and done kindness after kindness to many of you who are going to murder me in cold blood! But I will not. Shoot me if you will, and may my death lie heavy on your heads. This morning I would have said that my country would avenge me; I cannot say that now, for England has deserted us and I have no country. Therefore I leave the vengeance in the hands of God, who never fails to avenge, though sometimes he waits for long to do it. I am not afraid of you. Shoot me now if you like. I have lost my honour, my home, and my country; why should I not lose my life also?’

Frank Muller fixed his cold eyes upon the old man’s quivering face, and smiled a dreadful smile of triumph.

‘Prisoner, it is now my duty, in the name of God and the Republic, to sentence you to be shot to-morrow at dawn, and may the Almighty forgive you your wickedness and have mercy upon your soul.

‘Let the prisoner be removed, and let a man ride full speed to the empty house on the hillside, where the Englishman with the red beard used to live, one hour this side of Wakkerstroom, and bring back with him the clergyman he will find

waiting there, that the prisoner may be offered his ministrations. Also let two men be set to dig the prisoner's grave in the burial-place at the back of the house.'

The guards laid their hands upon the old man's shoulders, and he turned and went with them without a word. Bessie watched him go through her crack in the wall, till the dear old head with its fringe of white hairs and the bent frame were no more visible, and then at last, her faculties benumbed and exhausted by the horrors she was passing through, gave out, and she fell forward in a faint there upon the sacks.

Meanwhile Muller was writing the death-warrant on a sheet of his pocket-book. At the foot he left a space for his own signature, but he did not sign it, for reasons of his own. What he did do was to pass it round to be countersigned by all who had formed the court in this mock trial, his object being to implicate every man there present in the judicial murder by the direct and incontrovertible evidence of his sign-manual. Now, Boers are simple pastoral folk, but they are not quite so simple as not to see through a move like this, and thereon followed a very instructive little scene. They had, to a man, been willing enough to give their verdict for the old man's execution, but they were by no means ready to record it in black and white. As soon as ever they understood the object of their feared and respected commandant, a general desire manifested itself to make themselves respectively and collectively scarce. Suddenly they found that they had business outside, and something like a general attempt at a bolt ensued. Several of them had already tumbled off their extemporised jury box, and, headed by the redoubtable Hans, were approaching the entrance to the waggon-house, when Frank Muller perceived their design, and roared out in a voice of thunder:—

'Stop! Not a man leaves this place till the warrant is signed.'

Instantly the men halted, and began to look innocent and converse.

'Hans Coetzee, come here and sign,' said Muller again, whereon that unfortunate advanced with as good a grace as he could muster, murmuring to himself curses, not loud but deep, upon the head of 'that devil of a man, Frank Muller.'

However, there was no help for it, so, with a sickly smile, he put his name to the fatal document in big shaky letters. Then Muller called another man, who instantly tried to get out of it on the ground that his education had been neglected and that he

could not write, an excuse that availed him little, for Frank Muller quietly wrote his name for him, leaving a space for his mark. After that there was no more trouble, and in five minutes the entire back of the warrant was covered with the scrawling signatures of the various members of the court.

One by one the men went, till at last Muller was left alone, seated there on the saw-bench, his head sunk upon his breast, holding the warrant in one hand, while with the other he stroked his golden beard. Presently he stopped stroking his beard and sat for some minutes perfectly still, so still that he might have been carved in stone. By this time the afternoon sun had got behind the hill and the deep waggon-house was full of shadow that seemed to gather round him and invest him with a sombre, mysterious grandeur. He looked like a King of Evil, for Evil has her princes as well as Good, and stamps them with her imperial seal of power and crowns them with a diadem of her own, and among these Frank Muller was surely great. A little smile of triumph played upon his beautiful cruel face, a little light danced within his cold eyes and ran down the yellow beard. At that moment he might have sat for a portrait of his master, the devil.

Presently he awoke from his reverie. 'I have her!' he said to himself; 'I have her in a vice! She cannot escape me; she cannot let the old man die! Those curs have served my purpose well; they are as easy to play on as a fiddle, and I am a good player. Yes, and now we are getting to the end of the tune.'

(To be continued.)

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